



Brethren Around the Globe Celebrate the Feasts of God

By Ariana Del Signore

Even in a time of uncertainty and global crisis, faithful members of God's Church observed the Feast of Tabernacles. Some traveled to official UCG Feast sites to observe the Feast in person; others watched the webcast and worshiped in small groups close to home. Some camped with their families or found other ways to observe the Feast despite the circumstances.

In this issue, you'll find attendance counts from 56 sites and reports representing 54 areas. There are many others not reported on in *United News* who kept the Feast in small groups or local satellite sites. Even though not all are reflected here, God knows exactly how many brethren rejoiced before Him at the Feast this year.

The reports highlight many encouraging aspects of the Feast

of 2020. In Germany, joyful humming replaced singing due to local health restrictions. A satellite site in Berlin, Ohio, broadcast services over the local radio station to share the Feast with the community. Five people were baptized at the Feast in Ndanai, Kenya. Members in the Philippines were able to bond with brethren at sites across the country due to the virtual capabilities used in place of face-to-face meetings. Members in Victoria, Australia, stayed connected to each other virtually despite being physically limited to a 3-mile radius during the Feast.

Though attendance counts, reports and photos in this issue cannot account for every single person who observed the Feast of Tabernacles in 2020, I hope you find it encouraging to read about some of God's people who surmounted obstacles this year to worship and glorify God. **UN**



Two young Feastgoers enjoy a walk on the beach in Mossel Bay, South Africa.

Major Two-Part Print Advertising Campaign Now in Progress

By Peter Eddington

The United Church of God has initiated the first phase of a major two-part print advertising campaign. Upon its completion, a total of 117 million *Beyond Today* magazine and booklet ads will have been placed in coupon inserts in Sunday newspapers. Part one of this campaign took place on Oct. 4, 2020, when 21 million ads reached households across the United States. Part two will take place throughout January and February 2021 when an additional 96 million advertisements will be distributed.

The ad used in October 2020 featured the booklet, "How to

Understand the Bible," which had performed in previous print advertising campaigns as the best performing ad. In designing and updating all of the ads used in this campaign, we placed a much stronger emphasis on encouraging people to visit the BTmagazine.org website to subscribe rather than mail in 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 can make it more simple and convenient for them.

The advertisements and quantities to be placed in January and February are as follows:

- January 2021—25,000,000 of

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.

FREE!

To claim your FREE copy, visit us at BTmagazine.org/freebooklet

or, return this coupon to Beyond Today, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Your literature is absolutely free! For faster delivery visit our website noted above.

SG1VUB

Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns

Bible prophecy reveals that Jesus Christ will return to earth to reign over every nation. But when?

Our FREE BOOKLET, *Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns*, will help you clearly understand the seven specific prophecies that must come to pass preceding Christ's second coming.

FREE!

To claim your FREE copy, visit us at BTmagazine.org/freebooklet

or, return this coupon to Beyond Today, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Your literature is absolutely free! For faster delivery visit our website noted above.

Return this coupon today and receive:

- A FREE copy of *Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns*.
- A FREE subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine, filled with articles to help you strengthen your family and make sense of world events.

Beyond Today magazine and booklet ads planned to reach 117,000,000 U.S. households

"How to Understand the Bible."

- January 2021—25,000,000 of "Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns."

- February 2021—46,000,000 of

"Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?"

As always, your prayers are greatly appreciated for the success of this important effort to

carry out Jesus Christ's vital commission to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15, ESV). **UN**

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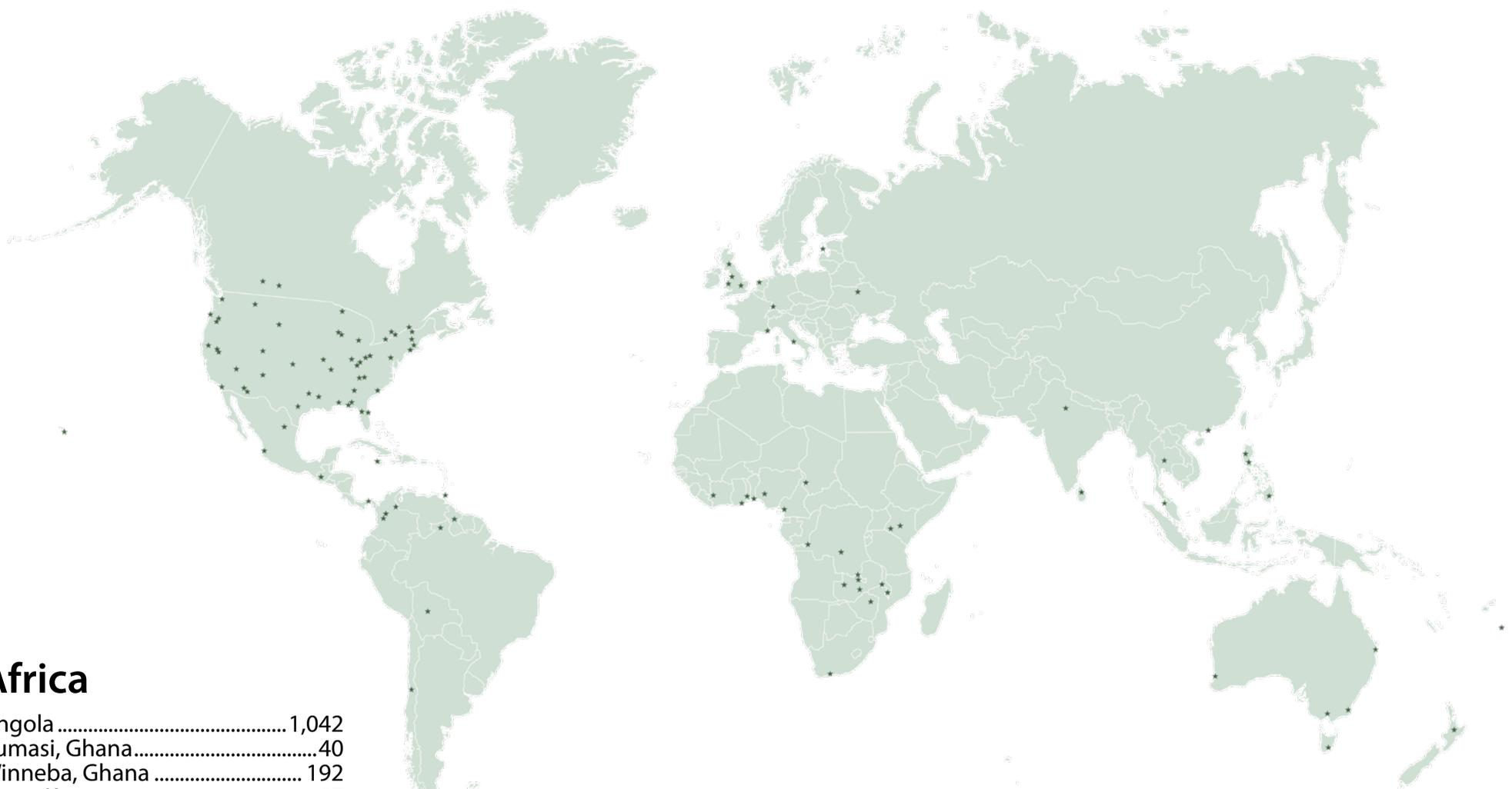
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Africa

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Angola | 1,042 |
| Kumasi, Ghana..... | 40 |
| Winneba, Ghana | 192 |
| Meru, Kenya..... | 67 |
| Ndanai, Kenya..... | 74 |
| Ogembo, Kenya | 64 |
| Blantyre, Malawi..... | 88 |
| Nkhwazi, Malawi..... | 92 |
| Mossel Bay, South Africa | 123 |
| Chipata, Zambia..... | 74 |
| Lusaka, Zambia | 162 |
| Mapoko, Zambia..... | 98 |
| Mufulira, Zambia | 140 |
| Chemba, Zimbabwe..... | 95 |

Asia/Pacific

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Merimbula, Australia..... | 70 |
| Rockingham, Australia..... | 80 |
| Sunshine Coast, Australia | 238 |
| Agra, India | 7 |
| Myanmar | 30 |
| Taupo, New Zealand..... | 50 |
| Philippines | 480 |
| Habarana, Sri Lanka..... | 40 |
| Hobart, Tasmania..... | 37 |

Canada

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Cochrane, Alberta | 139 |
| Osoyoos, British Columbia | 50 |
| Saskatoon, Saskatchewan | 37 |
| Vancouver, British Columbia | 25 |
| Venise-en-Québec | 25 |
| Satellite Sites | 52 |

Caribbean

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Long Creek, Guyana | 8 |
| Montego Bay, Jamaica..... | 100 |
| Soufriere, St. Lucia..... | 12 |

Europe/British Isles

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| UK Zoom connections..... | 69 |
| Roquebrune-sur-Argens, | |
| France | 25 |
| Titisee, Germany | 147 |
| Sabaudia, Italy | 90 |
| Satellite Sites | 11+ |

Latin America

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Brazil..... | 38 |
| Online connections | |
| to Chile and Mexico..... | 101 |

United States

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Big Sandy, Texas | 51 |
| Branson, Missouri | 561 |
| Cincinnati, Ohio | 281 |
| Daytona Beach, Florida | 687 |
| Gatlinburg, Tennessee | 640 |
| Glacier Country, Montana | 408 |
| Lancaster, Pennsylvania | 274 |
| New Braunfels, Texas | 322 |
| Oceanside, California | 75 |
| Panama City Beach, Florida | 552 |
| Pewaukee, Wisconsin..... | 163 |
| Rapid City, South Dakota..... | 437 |
| St. George, Utah..... | 1,001 |
| Tucson, Arizona..... | 102 |
| Satellite Sites | 270+ |
| Online Connections..... | 1600+ |



Africa

Angola

More than 12 Festival satellite sites were held in Portuguese-speaking Angola across seven regions. Several recorded sermons in Portuguese were sent by Jorge de Campos for the brethren to listen to during the Feast. Local elders and pastors organized the individual satellite sites.

Despite the many Feast sites in seven regions of Angola, a large number of brethren still could not travel to a site. A number of U.S. brethren, via LifeNets, sent additional financial assistance, which enabled many more in Angola to participate in the Feast.

The Angolan sites were scattered throughout the country, and because of local restrictions they could only meet in the church halls during the Sabbaths and Sunday. The other days during the Feast they met in open areas of the countryside.

The Luanda province had six satellite sites. Attendance in the areas was as follows: in the Cazenga municipality there were 250 brethren; in Cacuaco, Vidrul, 56 brethren; 120 brethren in Boa Esperança (the location of the Água Viva school); 70 brethren in Compão; 90 members in Viana-Mulenvos and 60 brethren in Belo Monte.

In the province of Huambo, 70 brethren attended the Feast. About 140 brethren camped in the province of Malanje. In the Cunene province, 46 brethren met in the city of Onjiva. There were also 70 brethren gathered in the province of Bié and more than 70 in Quibala, which is in the province of Kwanza Sul. There are a few other dispersed sites that at this time have not reported back due to their remoteness and lack of easy communication. These numbers do not include all of the people who could not travel to any site to keep the Feast.

Jorge de Campos

Winneba, Ghana

Sprawling along the Gulf of Guinea on the south coast of Ghana, the historic fishing town of Winneba, 35 miles west of Ghana's capital Accra, was the site for the Feast of Tabernacles for the third time. This town has a rich musical tradition anchored in the various nationally renowned choral groups who reside there.

The COVID-19 pandemic im-

plications meant that all six Ghana congregations could not gather in one location for the Feast, so the Winneba site was essentially an Accra/Winneba assembly, with the outlying Agona and Kwanyako congregations in the south traveling by road to join in on the Holy Days for a Feast high attendance of 192 joyful brethren. The further north congregations in Kumasi and Yeji constituted a separate Feast site with a collective average attendance of 40 brethren.

While the daily messages inspired great hope for a healing future beyond today's news of despair, they also fed into uplifting fellowship. Edifying special music presentations and the overall energetic song service played their part in enriching the Feast worship experience.

The blessing of a spacious open-air meeting hall allowed for ample socially distanced seating and better ventilation. Activities such as football and a beach visit were thrown in for good measure.

Notwithstanding a rainstorm at the tail-end of the Feast that, unfortunately, caused widespread floods elsewhere, we enjoyed beautiful sunny weather; the cool Atlantic breeze added to the tranquil ambience.

It was truly a refreshing and wonderful blessing, despite the challenging times, to be able to keep the Feast of Tabernacles where God placed His name.

Betty Meselebe

Meru, Kenya

Meru is located on the northeast slopes of Mount Kenya, with the Meru town situated about 5 miles (8 km) north of the equator, at an altitude of approximately 4,900 feet (1,500m) in an area of mixed forests and clearings, small towns, villages and rural farms. In the early mornings, this Feast site had a view of Mount Kenya, the highest mountain in Kenya and the second highest mountain in Africa.

An average of 67 brethren attended from Kamuketha and from different congregations including Nairobi, Bagaria and Elburgon. Services were conducted in English and translated either to Swahili or the local language, Meru. Sunshine, providing a clear view of the surrounding hills and Mount Kenya, prevailed during the Feast.

Messages centered on God's Kingdom, faith, endurance, over-

coming and reconciliation. The videos from the home office and Victor Kubik's Feast message, "Thy Kingdom Come," were also highlights of the Feast this year.

Some activities were avoided during this year's Feast for the safety of the members. However, brethren were able to fellowship and even play a game of darts while observing the government's regulations. On the sixth day of the Feast, they also enjoyed a Kenyan roast meat meal locally known as "Nyama Choma." The theme for the goat roasting was "yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). Some members also chose not to travel for the Feast due to the pandemic and met in their local congregations.

These eight days were filled with joy, peace and inspirational messages about the Kingdom of God. It was also a time to spend with our families and brethren—truly memorable indeed!

Simon Ng'ang'a

Ndanai, Kenya

This year's Feast began very well with prayers and Bible reading on the first day Sabbath. We had incredible messages, Bible studies and family day activities which added joy during the Feast. We operated on a very tight budget but with the best meals and drinks we could possibly afford. Although we had no off-site activities, young adults and youth were busy playing field games, musical chairs, etc. Family day was colorful and a favorite; it broke all the barriers of age and everyone participated.

This is the first time we have held a Feast site at Ndanai, and the area was a beehive of activity. We had good attendance, with a daily average of 74 people. On Thursday towards the end of the Feast, we had five baptisms of people who had been counseling for some time prior to the Feast.

Harrison Nzavi Kioko

Blantyre, Malawi

The Feast of Tabernacles is the highlight of the year for members of God's Church worldwide. It is against this background that the Blantyre congregation in Malawi celebrated the Feast. Among other things, this Festival offers opportunities to share food with God's people for an entire week.

Because we spend God's second tithe, it often feels like an

all-expense paid vacation that doesn't cost us a *kwacha*, the Malawi currency. This is indeed a time when God commands us to spend the second tithe on whatever our heart desires.

It's also a wonderful time spent listening to sermons driving us towards a time when Jesus Christ shall take over the governments of this corrupt world, and usher in God's Kingdom of peace, joy and prosperity.

Every year before the Feast, a common complaint is "pre-Feast trials." Problems crop up concerning health issues, financial woes and of late, COVID-19. Satan knows that God commands us to rejoice, so he tries to put some obstacles in front of us so that we give up. But trials are part of our Christian growth. One of the most important benefits is getting our spiritual batteries recharged from observing the Feast with fellow members of God's Church. Without the annual recharge, it is more difficult to face trials.

Missing the Feast can also be discouraging. This year's Feast was observed with a difference as people had to heed some measures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall however, it was valuable time listening to Feast sermons, including audio sermons from the home office. It was also wonderful to sing praises to God.

One of the highlights during the Feast this year was the ordination of Flora Chinangwa as deaconess by pastor Gracious Mpilangwe. The ordination took place on the Eighth Day and was marked by a heavy downpour. This is normal at this time of the year in Malawi as rains are due for the planting season.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, some activities were shelved to avoid close contact with each other. These included the Feast dance, field trip, variety show and sports. On average, the Feast was attended by 88 brethren, including senior citizens—some of them in their 90s.

Osborne Liyawo

Nkhwazi, Malawi

The Feast site at Nkhwazi has been operational for three years now. Brethren that congregate in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi, and those from the surrounding districts planned to converge at this site for the Feast. However, Feast preparation did not go according to plan due to the pandemic. The application forms came late because we were

not quite sure if we could meet at the Feast. During the preparation period, the government had put a ban on gatherings of more than 100 people. Despite this, we received applications that showed we would have 110 people, and this was our planning figure.

The opening sermon had an attendance of 92 people and over the course of the Feast the figures moved up and down a bit, but with little or no threat of going beyond the government set figures. Our program continued well, with early morning jogging by the whole group and aerobics at our football site every day. Services began daily at 10:30 a.m. with singing, sermonettes, recitation of Bible verses by Sabbath school children and sermons delivered by Cephas Chapamba, Haiton Thungula and Francis Ngopola.

Other activities included afternoon outdoor sports like football, volleyball, netball, group dancing and other activities. The Feast food committee also organized group meals, especially lunch, which was shared by all who attended the Feast.

On the fourth day it rained, which changed the Feast program because the brethren from Lilongwe had to go back home since our make-shift booths were no longer habitable due to the water. The group was split into two. Some continued gathering from Nkhwazi and others at our church campus in Mchesi, Lilongwe. This brought some loneliness to both groups knowing that the planned activities would change, including the speaking schedule. But to everyone's surprise all went well and the baptismal plans continued. On the Eighth Day four brethren were baptized into the Body of Christ.

God showed us that His plan for human salvation still stands by protecting from diseases. Despite COVID-19 we were protected till the Feast came to the end.

Cephas J. Chapamba

Mossel Bay, South Africa

This year, 123 enthusiastic participants attended a successful Feast in Mossel Bay, South Africa. This was significantly down from almost 180 last year, which included more than 40 international visitors. There were also several

Please see next page

Mossel Bay, South Africa

local members who were unable or chose not to attend due to concerns about COVID-19.

Until Sept. 15, there was uncertainty about whether to meet together since provincial borders were partially closed to travel to keep with the restriction to 50 people per gathering. However, borders opened and gatherings were allowed at 50 per cent capacity. We were well under that, but what we lacked in numbers we made up for in enthusiasm. This Feast was undoubtedly marked by everyone stepping out of their comfort zones to serve however they could to get involved and fellowship with people. A highlight was our daily beach walk led by our Festival elder, Roy Demont. The beautiful stretch of beach, with the daily potential of spotting dolphins, seals and whales, afforded the perfect opportunity to fellowship and get some exercise and also for kids to burn off energy before services.

Something we tried this year, which was based on a successful ladies' presentation given last year, was a series of interactive evening presentations. Although some were more interactive than others, this is something we now plan to build on in the future.

We had five of these presentations, designed to be as practical as possible in dealing with an increasingly challenging world. We started with a presentation intended purely to inspire, titled God's Incredible Creation, focusing on Psalm 46:10—"Be still, and know that I am God." The other four presentations consisted of one titled "Boundaries" for ladies; another for men called "Our God-Designed Role as Men" (presented by Jorge De Campos via Zoom from Jamaica!); and two more titled "Tithing" and "Dealing With People in Crisis."

Those unable to attend could connect to our services and Bible studies via Zoom. Although Zoom is not the most ideal tool for this, we decided to stick with something we'd become familiar with over the last six months, not having had enough time to familiarize ourselves with and implement webcasting—although webcasting is now something we will be looking into. Nonetheless, a good number of very appreciative and otherwise isolated members were able to benefit from connecting every day. With masks being worn during services, everyone's temperatures being taken daily and socially distant seating as constant

reminders of a world more in need of the Kingdom than ever, we were still able to collectively focus on the wonderful hope of the future and enjoy a memorable Feast together!

Vivien Botha

Chipata, Zambia

Altogether we had 37 adults, 22 youths and 15 preteens in attendance. We had enough safe water (thanks to LifeNets-Australia), a good worship hall and other things (thanks to LifeNets-USA) and the youths were able to have sports during the Feast. We are grateful that your love has made us reach where we are.

Filius and Chosiwe Jere

Lusaka, Zambia

The Feast of Tabernacles was held after a health certificate was issued by the Public Health Department due to COVID-19. A certificate and permission was granted following an inspection by authorized officers from the Public Health Department. Church members arrived at the Verino Feast Site on Oct. 2, and services began the following day with a virtual address from Victor Kubik, who spoke of the great meaning the Feast holds.

This Feast site was attended by 162 people. Members came from all 10 congregations around Zambia. Some of the activities that we had were family day, women's day, youth day and a seniors' lunch. Although it looked a bit strange as we tried to follow the health guidelines due to COVID-19, it was an exciting time and many people were very happy. People washed their hands with soap and used hand sanitizer.

We would like to thank the home office and other donors who made our Feast a success. It is our prayer that God blesses them for their giving heart to the less privileged. The Feast ended on the evening of the Eighth Day/Last Great Day, and the next day all the members departed to their various homes. The Feast was incident-free. We thank God for His protection during the Festival.

Major Talama

Mapoko, Zambia

Derrick and Cherry Pringle visited Mapoko for the first two days of the Feast. I [Derrick] felt that I should go to give them

support and encouragement as they are virtually on their own. Mapoko is about 15 miles (24km) past Mumbwa on the tar road, then 4 miles (7km) on the most awful dirt road that you can imagine. It was worth the effort and the people were so pleased to see us. Their living conditions are rough; no water on tap, no refrigerators or freezers for perishables, no fans or air conditioning, no flush toilets, cooking done on open fires and although they are housed in tents it is very dusty due to an extended dry season. There were 98 in attendance, and some built grass shelters in addition to the 16 tents that had been brought from Verino.

But despite that, we soon felt joyful and spiritually enhanced. The exceptional singing and special music did not lack volume or harmony. I was amazed at the talent and expertise of the song leader, Owen Kasakabantu. He had a strong voice and kept perfectly in tune despite no musical accompaniment. On the first day I gave the morning and afternoon sermons. Both messages emphasized putting past events behind them and reaching for a high spiritual level to qualify for the Kingdom of God. We also watched the welcome Feast video and Feast music which they greatly appreciated. I had taken a generator for that purpose. The offering was generous despite the low income of many attendees. On the second day they viewed Mr. Kubik's Feast sermon video about the Kingdom of God. I also did the blessing of the six children who were there.

That afternoon I had a meeting with the men and my wife Cherry met with the women.

Derrick Pringle

Mufulira, Zambia

This year's Feast was another amazing time in Mufulira with 124 people coming from different parts of the country. This was our largest Feast yet and we are grateful to our Creator for such a successful event, especially in these hard times of COVID-19. Food prepared by our kitchen staff was enjoyable, as was the spiritual food proclaimed by a variety of speakers with one common theme: "Thy Kingdom come." The kids were divided into three groups according to their age and had their own teachers and classes during the Feast.

As in the case of a growing child, changes are part of the process. In our case, the Church here is growing and a lot of facilities are needed as we grow. However, we are very grateful to the sponsors and for the new items we received at our Feast site, including additional huge water tanks to help end the water shortages, new mattresses and new tents. The bringing of mineral water to our members helped us by preventing stomach problems and other unnecessary illnesses due to the water contaminants.

The 2020 Feast of Tabernacles was the most successful Feast we've seen. We had a large group of people coming together at one place with one spirit who showed love in everything they did—whether special music or recreational activities. Calmness and brotherly love were exhibited in the days we spent together. This is a time when people come to learn God's Word and picture the coming Kingdom of God, knowing that someday we will reign with Christ.

We thank all of our hard-working leaders: the deacons, the minister and all those who took part in ensuring that this Feast was a success! And not forgetting those who supported us financially and in prayers: may the good Lord bless you.

Rodrick Epomba

Chemba, Zimbabwe

What a Feast! Brethren traveled about 200 miles (320 km) to rural Chemba (located south in the Midlands province) in a minibus and truck owned by the Church to join our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. The road to the Feast site can be treacherous and challenging as it is not paved or maintained.

Chemba became the darling of us all because of the rural setting and absolute tranquility of the area, which presented a great opportunity for a truly spiritual and uplifting Feast. All COVID-19 protocol was observed, with masks required and temperatures taken before every service. Lessons in baking bread buns were given by Mrs. Pombi and family day was enjoyed with both netball and soccer games.

This truly was a unique and refreshing Feast with attendance topping 95 during the Feast.

Mabasa Chichaya

Asia/Pacific
Merimbula, Australia

With COVID-19 restrictions in place it was challenging to know what to expect for the Feast in Merimbula this year. Up until about a month before the Feast, members were planning to travel to Merimbula only to watch a live webcast from their accommodation. However, we were pleased that a venue became available for daily services. We thank God for this blessing and realize that we need to wait on the Lord to provide.

Around 70 people from across the state of New South Wales assembled each day of the Feast to fellowship, sing with joy and learn about the meaning of the Feast. Some had not seen each other for six months due to COVID-19 restrictions. In previous years, members from the state of Victoria would also attend Merimbula. This year, those members were not able to travel out of their state, so they were greatly missed.

The smaller number of people meant a more intimate Feast. Members took the opportunity to have meals with each other and talk about how they got on in the troubled year of 2020—and why it is so important to have the hope of the coming Kingdom of God. The messages were very encouraging this way, too.

Each day we were able to webcast services. As there were many who stayed home this year, they were able to join services and be part of what was taking place. At the start of each service, the video camera panned around the hall so members could wave at those watching online. We also had members from Tonga tune in, which was appreciated by them and us.

Usually several activities are organized during the Feast. This year we weren't able to have those same activities. It meant members had to take it upon themselves to arrange to fellowship in small groups, which members did. This showed that a Feast does not need a lot to be very enjoyable. One activity that was organized for the teens was a cooking challenge. Two teams had to make dishes from scratch using only two theme ingredients—milk and honey! It was a fun afternoon.

Despite not knowing what restrictions would mean for the Feast, it was truly a wonderful Feast had by all!

Matthew Sieff

Rockingham, Western Australia

“A special, wonderful time with a feeling of togetherness and unity” was one comment made after the Feast in Western Australia. It was a blessing to have all the congregation present as no one had been able to leave the state.

The Church was extremely thankful that the Feast could be kept at the usual venue in Rockingham, a seaside city about 31 miles (50 km) from Perth. Very few restrictions were in place as our state has a closed border, and we were able to have more freedom than many places in the world.

All services were webcast to members in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia as they were unable to attend a Feast site.

On the opening night we were reminded that Ephesians 1 sets the scene for the Feast and we were there to learn respect and awe for God, and to rejoice.

Through the wonders of technology, we received sermons from Victor Kubik, Gary Petty and speakers from Queensland and Victoria as well as our Festival elder Grant Chick and local speakers Jean-Jacques Matter and Peter Crikis. The video on how various members were coping with the impact of the virus was a very moving reminder of what is happening elsewhere.

Some messages focused on the Bride of Christ, the Bible being like a jigsaw puzzle, the economy during the Millennium, being thankful to God, God's government, the many faceted titles of Christ (introduced by Handel's Messiah), new beginnings and God's armor. We were encouraged to support, comfort and exhort one another. The younger members of the congregation also had a youth study and a children's Bible study.

On days six and seven of the Feast two special ceremonies took place. On the sixth day, the blessing of the children was performed for baby Ashton and 2-year-old Ava.

On day seven, the responsibilities of a deacon were outlined before the ordinations of Jean-Jacques Matter, Hugh Davidson and Rick Grey to the role.

Many messages from around the world were shared during the week, reminding us of our Church family all over the world.

Special music once more reflected the preparation and com-

mitment of singers and instrumentalists playing piano, violin and guitar, and the youth choir which sang on the Eighth Day/Last Great Day.

The Perth tradition of a “meet and greet” after services on the first day became more of a “meet and eat” as there were no visitors to meet, but the enjoyment of being with one another and sharing food together was delightful.

The “fun family bug” night also included a display of teenage photos and what those teenagers' aspirations were, including members whose ages range into the 80s. The younger ones also enjoyed go-karting. Some traveled out to Penguin Island, just off the coast, to see the largest colony of “little penguins” on the coast of Western Australia.

After having a great deal of cloud cover over previous weeks, we were blessed to have a clear night available, which allowed Matt Woods from the Perth Observatory and four members of his volunteer group to bring two large telescopes down for a star gazing. Coincidentally, this occurred during Space Week in Australia.

“Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing” (Isaiah 40:26, New International Version).

The telescopes were set up on a high viewing platform at Point Peron just outside Rockingham, overlooking the Indian Ocean. Although the night was cold and windy, 47 adults and children spent several hours looking at a very tiny part of God's wonderful universe.

Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Albireo (a yellow/blue double star), Butterfly cluster, 47 Tucanae globular cluster and Tarantula Nebula were seen.

Matt shared commentary and fascinating facts during the evening, as well as bringing other objects to our attention with a laser pointer. It was a much enjoyed and unique Feast experience.

The Eighth Day/Last Great Day message encouraged us to run the race “better, stronger, faster, higher” and to be lights. Our usual final hymn was “God Be With You.”

A catered lunch was later served in the main hall before we began to depart back home.

Leone Schreuders

Sunshine Coast, Australia

The Sunshine Coast Feast site lived up to its name. Every day was sunny and the pleasant temperatures kept the beaches a popular place for surfing, swimming or just strolling.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, borders from other states in Australia were closed. We had 265 people registered from Queensland but many who were older or who had health issues decided not to attend in person. Our high attendance during the Feast was 238. Safe distancing and signing in were followed according to the Health Department's regulations. Our brethren were willingly compliant with all the rules we had to follow, and we had no issues with the hall management; in fact, we had plenty of compliments because of our orderly compliance. They were happy to have us this year under the circumstances and want us to return. This was our 14th year at this popular holiday location.

The messages were on target, speaking about God's great plan and the part the firstfruits will have in the Millennium. We produced a webcast for the Australian Feast sites that were locked down and also for those who had to view our service from home or from their accommodation. However, we also reached members and associates from India, the U.S., Canada, England, Hong Kong, Vanuatu and Italy. We received notes from many areas expressing gratitude for webcasting in a way that allowed them to participate in a live service.

The consensus is that this Feast was the most inspiring we have experienced regardless of the restrictions imposed on us. Even though there were no structured activities, attendees found ways to fellowship.

We finished up with a pizza evening after the last service. One of our members paid for an order of pizza that served more than half of our Feast attendance at a local park. It was a great impromptu fellowship gathering with few restrictions outdoors.

The organization for seating proved to be a favorable development. Those attending liked the idea of assigned seating for themselves or their families.

We also received a Health Department notice that similar restrictions could continue for the next two years.

Bill Bradford

Victoria, Australia

As we drew closer to the Feast of Tabernacles, it became obvious that Victorian members' plans to attend their Feast site of choice—in Australia or overseas—was not going to be possible. The state of Victoria remained in lockdown and we could not travel further than 3 miles (5 km) from our homes. The designated site at the beautiful Lakes Entrance had been organized on the possibility that restrictions may have been lifted in time. But this did not eventuate, and members were informed they would need to prepare for the “Online Feast at Home.” Plans were then pursued to establish various ways that we could still rejoice “together” while isolated in our homes.

Just prior to the Feast, some restrictions in regional Victoria were lifted, allowing many regional members to travel to Lakes Entrance. Around ten families took advantage of this freedom. However, they were only able to meet in small groups of five and only outdoors. No congregating for Church services was allowed.

Due to limited hall availability, the elders in Victoria were able to webcast a full service on the two Holy Days only. At all other times, members logged into the webcast from the Sunshine Coast Feast site in Queensland. Members prepared for and participated in the services as though they were present at the hall. It was still a wonderful blessing to be able to observe God's Feast during this challenging time.

Observing the Feast at home meant members needed to be creative in how they kept the Feast. Some set up tents in their backyards, braving strong winds and rain at times. Plans were also made by members to facilitate online activities, Bible lessons and discussions. The children and teens enjoyed online Feast lessons, as well as an online biblically themed team scavenger hunt that ran throughout the Feast. The men and women had separate opportunities for online chat sessions. The young adults enjoyed an energetic and creative online goose chase requiring them to complete biblical, as well as physical, challenges.

Individual households—some with only one person—participated in an abstract form of the online game night. A trivia night was also held where each household brought their own biblical questions to challenge everyone with.

One of the hugely successful and uplifting initiatives was the putting together of a register of those who were locked down for the Feast, along with their contact details (members volunteered their information). This was distributed to various members near and far so we could all keep in touch during the Feast, sending cards, food/gift packs or flowers, making phone calls or sending emails. A few fortunate members were able to meet up with someone in their 3-mile radius for a walk in a community garden.

This truly was a very different Feast for everyone. However, it was also a very positive and spiritually uplifting Feast, with members going above and beyond to ensure that all enjoyed the celebrations and being able to rejoice in the Feast.

Stephen Clark

Agra, India

I hope you all have returned to home safely after a great time at the Feast of Tabernacles with the blessing of God. I am aware that due to the pandemic many people have celebrated the Feast by staying at their home. I am also among them. Here in Agra, India, seven of us celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and pictured the Kingdom of God. We celebrated the first day together, and also gathered together on the Eighth Day. The other days, we watched the webcasts and heard the messages via our phones.

On the first day of the Feast, we all met together at my home and shared the day. The service began at 10 a.m. Edison Massey led the service; we sang three hymns and watched a Jelly video, then sang another hymn before watching the pre-recorded message that David Schreiber had prepared. Edison and I translated the message into Hindi for some so that everyone could understand the message. After the meeting, we ate a well-made breakfast and discussed the message. To make our day more special, we prepared delicious and tasty food like mutton's biryani, chicken fry, delicious fruits, sweets and many more things.

We also gathered at my home on the Eighth Day. We began our meeting at the same time as the first day of the Feast, and listened to the pre-recorded message. We again meditated on it, discussed

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Agra, India

it and enjoyed snacks with juice and cold drinks. We also went for a small picnic and had a lot of fun before enjoying another special meal. We rejoiced in the Kingdom of God even in the days of this pestilence and learned about His Feast days. All this happened only because of Mr. and Mrs. Schreiber and the church areas in Minnesota. They did not leave us alone even in these difficult days, they helped us so that we could celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. I thank each and every person who helped and worked hard so that we can all enjoy Feast moments here. There were also other small groups and members who kept the Feast at home throughout India.

Wilson Unas

Myanmar

First of all, we are greatly thankful to our loving Father—our Creator God—for His wonderful blessing of the opportunity to be together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day (the Last Great Day). Although we did not have the chance to meet in person due to COVID-19, we thank God for the technology that brought us together online. We had clear connections in both video and audio, with eight connections total: two from Sakhangyi (Myanmar), three from Yangon (Myanmar), two from Singapore and one from the UK. Though we live far apart, times were adjustable for everyone's convenience. We also had our dear friend David Bensinger, who gave one sermon and two Bible studies. There were at least 30 participants for each service. We would have had more, but a limited number of people have cell phones. We held services each day and four Bible studies throughout the week.

Several ministers were recruited to speak to the brethren. Though we could not meet in person, the spiritual nourishment from our ministers was bountiful, leaving us edified and inspired. Topics such as temporary dwellings, the Kingdom of God, the four horsemen and seven seals of Revelation 6, salvation and redemption, healing and fruitfulness were covered.

On the seventh day David Bensinger joined us live online to give a sermon even though it was midnight where he was. We were very thankful to him for his time, vigilance and persever-

ance. The title of his sermon was, "Lessons From Nehemiah." We learned many good examples from Nehemiah that we should imitate, including the importance of prayer and fasting. As true Christians, we should devote time to prayer and fasting when necessary.

On the Eighth Day we listened to a sermon titled "No Man Left Behind" by Peter Edgington. God will one day build His family and will bring His sons and daughters into His family—no one will be forgotten or left behind. All the sermons we heard gave us new knowledge, understanding and edification. For this we are thankful to our ministers for their kindness and support and we all pray that God will look after and bless our ministers all around the globe in their mission of preaching and proclaiming the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

We enjoyed the opportunity to fellowship online together after each service. We pray that if it is God's will, all things will be in better condition in the near future so that we will be able to meet in person for all God's Holy Days and Festivals.

Thaw Htoo Davidson Lay Beh

Taupo, New Zealand

Just over 50 brethren came together in a spirit of peace and unity to keep the Feast in Acacia Bay on the shores of beautiful Lake Taupo, Aotearoa, New Zealand. This was the first time in 2020 that the New Zealand brethren were able to all congregate and each day provided welcome opportunity for the brethren to fellowship together—whether the potluck picnic in the park, the dinner cruise or at one of the open home dinners. Dry, unseasonably warm weather was an additional blessing.

With no elders present at the Feast, messages were provided through a combination of live local speakers and international speakers joining the service via Zoom from Australia and the United States. The technology worked well and the brethren enjoyed hearing from a wide variety of speakers—a particular highlight was having Mr. Kubik speak in the morning on the Eighth Day.

In a year where there have been relatively few opportunities to meet together due to lockdown restrictions, even locally for the weekly Sabbath, it was a tremendous blessing to have re-

strictions eased just in time for the Feast and we were collectively very thankful to God for this.

Peter Forster

Philippines

The Philippines is experiencing one of the world's longest and strictest COVID-19 lockdowns, and this has intensified the nation's economic and human suffering. All of the brethren have been challenged—some have lost jobs or businesses and others have contracted COVID-19 and thankfully recovered. Some families also lost loved ones, so this year's theme of "Strengthening the Brethren to Enter the Kingdom" was very apt.

For the first time in the Philippines' Church history, due to the pandemic restrictions, the Feast of Tabernacles was observed mainly at home by about 480 brethren. These restrictions did not prevent the brethren from joyfully keeping the Feast and fellowshiping together. Some brethren gathered in small clusters with nearby families, and brethren from all over the country fellowshipped at the end of each online service. The inspired messages of God's plan of salvation for mankind truly strengthened the brethren.

Nationwide services were held via Facebook Live streaming. A locally produced welcome video was also shown right after the welcome video provided by the home office. Other highlights included messages from our senior pastor in Alaska, David Dobson, and the inspiring message from Mr. Kubik. The local speakers also provided uplifting spiritual messages throughout the Feast.

Festival services were enhanced by the Festival virtual choir, consisting of members in the Philippines and internationally. All ages were represented by the children's choir, the seniors' duet and the international choir. Local and international musicians also rendered beautiful offertory music on piano and guitar.

After daily morning services, afternoon and evening online activities included special events tailored for families, youths and senior citizens. The Festival Show showcased the talents of brethren in dances and songs, with participants of all ages from the Philippines and some neighboring Asian countries.

Youth activities included a Bible study titled, "Anchored to God." Games and contests of poster-making, essay-writing and

vlogs showcased the talents of our youths and the importance of teamwork and unity. As a result, they built strong connections and formed a support group to combat the pulls of this world. A few of their comments below reflect their appreciation:

- "The pandemic this world is experiencing right now will not stop us from reaching out and strengthening each other."

- "I learned to be patient and be more friendly, to have confidence, and most of all I learned about God's Word through the games/activities we've done."

- "We are still together despite the distance."

The singles and young adults fellowship forum focused on issues and challenges faced by young adults in the Church. Family day included games and prizes for all ages and performances to entertain. The women's enrichment meeting theme, "Women of Faith," provided opportunity for ladies to share experiences, learn and connect with one another. In the men's fellowship forum, gentlemen shared their experiences, including how Spokesman Club has benefited them personally, professionally and in becoming better ambassadors for God. The seniors' fellowship involved virtual sharing of experiences on how they came to understand the truth and join the Church of God.

These activities were all conducted via Facebook Livestream and Zoom. Many thanks to our technical crew for their vital part in providing these virtual Feast activities. They did an excellent job of connecting us all!

The challenge of intermittent Internet connection was solved by pre-recording messages for some speakers. One couple who do not receive cell phone signal in their home were given pre-recorded messages for each day of the Feast.

The small group of brethren celebrating the Festival in Davao City attracted the attention of local health workers, who made two official visits. However, the health workers were greeted by law-abiding brethren observing proper social distancing and health protocols, and no criticism was made. The brethren joyfully continued their Feast observance.

A silver lining of being unable to have three Feast sites this year is that our brethren bonded across all the regions. Indeed, this brought everyone closer and made us even more grateful for our fellow members of the same body. With the Festival theme of "Strengthening the Brethren to

Enter the Kingdom," the pandemic proved not to be a hindrance to the brethren observing the Feast because their minds were focused on the apostle Paul's admonition in Acts 14:22: "Strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith and by telling them, it is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God." The brethren also remembered that the things happening now have been prophesied to happen prior to the return of our Savior to establish His Kingdom on this earth. May "Thy Kingdom come" soon!

Rey Evasco, Jose Campos and Raul Villacote

Habarana, Sri Lanka

There were 40 brethren between the ages of 1 and 91 who completed a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles at Habarana Village in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. We give all glory and honor to our Almighty God and Father for a joyous and inspiring Feast. We are also most grateful and thankful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who led the way from planning to completion.

The ambience in the conference hall reflected the festive mood. The lovely decorations of flowers and curtaining varied daily. The brethren were eager to attend daily services and to listen and digest God's Word. The spiritual messages were compelling, meaningful and enriching. We are thankful to the local men who delivered some wonderful messages. The icing on the spiritual cake came from the pre-recorded messages from President Victor Kubik, and pastors David Schreiber, Dan Dowd, Gary Petty as well as others who spoke at Panama City Beach. The special music provided by the local brethren and the virtual Festival choir were uplifting and beautifully done.

The daily fellowship and unity were outstanding. In the evenings, some brethren would run up to the lake at the rear of the hotel to watch the sun go down beyond the hills. The sun emitting shades of yellow turning to orange and then to red was a beautiful sight before dark skies set in. The typical forest trees gave all the shade one would want. The occasional wind coming across the lake kept the environment cooler. Brethren enjoyed the tree houses, hammocks, monkeys and

Habarana, Sri Lanka

rock squirrels, and watching a small herd of elephants roaming down the other end of the lake at sundown. Observing and listening to the birds chirp returning home to their nests in the trees was amazing. All glory and honor belongs to our Creator God whose creation we can only marvel at with awe.

The brethren served one another with gladness. Teamwork and unity were very evident throughout the Feast. The brethren's participation in events such as cricket, family day, the variety show, sightseeing (walking and cycling) and rock climbing was delightful. The evidence that God and our Savior was with us throughout the eight days was more than visible and felt due to a second wave of COVID-19 that occurred in our country. Despite some concerns, our loving God ensured this outbreak did not deter the completion of a wonderful Feast. This Feast was one that will be remembered by the brethren for a long time, possibly as the best Feast ever. One member counted 345 days to the next Feast!

A big thank you to pastor David Schreiber and his wife for their love and direction as always. We also thank the home office team for an outstanding job of services rendered to our brethren in Sri Lanka and the rest of the world. We thank and owe God everything because "unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1, English Standard Version).

Frank Reckerman

Hobart, Tasmania

There were 37 brethren, comprising the two local congregations that meet in the north and south of this island state of Australia, who combined to keep this year's Feast of Tabernacles at Fern Tree, a mountainside district overlooking Hobart, Tasmania's capital city. We were blessed in that the state's COVID-19-free status enabled us to meet together physically, though with necessary precautions being observed.

Fern Tree is 1,370 feet above sea level, located in the foothills of Mt. Wellington. The small meeting hall, set in tranquil bushland surroundings, was an ideal location in which to come out of the world for eight days and focus on our great Creator and His wonderful Holy Day plan.

Though a small satellite site,

we were privileged to hear Kingdom-focused messages transmitted via webcast from both Victoria and Queensland. In spite of wet and chilly weather, the Feast atmosphere was warm as brethren made full use of the fellowship opportunities in this peaceful and sheltered setting.

Those attending also enjoyed two pre-arranged lunches at nearby restaurants, and an afternoon of "Words and Music" showcasing the talents of various members and enabling all present to join in some enthusiastic community singing.

A potluck lunch on the Eighth Day gave the opportunity to break bread together before the final service.

In his closing remarks, Festival elder Tom Burchard commented, "We do not know what the next year may bring. But I hope and pray that you will depart from this year's Feast spiritually strengthened, energized and encouraged to face whatever the future holds with confidence under the care of our Almighty Father and His Son."

Elizabeth Burchard

Canada
Cochrane, Alberta

The Feast in Cochrane went very smoothly. We had a high of 139 and about 150 registered. To social distance, we used an overflow room with two large TVs and one large screen which was hooked up by HDMI cable from the main meeting room. We webcast each day with more than 30 connections, and a phone hookup for those who without computers. An average of 6-9 people connected via the phone hookup. Our technical crew did a fantastic job!

We had three greeters at a table at the entrance, past the hand sanitizer station. They had the registration list, which we kept for possible contact tracing. For any who had not registered, the greeters took down their contact information. We required masks to be worn when entering and exiting, plus while singing congregational hymns. Glen Klaussen was on security and made sure that those entering had masks.

The weather was great. Everyone stayed healthy. There were only a few anointings. For music, we had three pianists as well as an ensemble that stayed compliant with COVID-19 guidelines. It was wonderful to have three selections of the adult virtual choir

plus two children's choir pieces of special music. Owen Davis took over coordinating the music since Ralph Redline, who had been planned as music coordinator, was not able to come from the U.S. because of the border crossing restrictions.

The messages were excellent. The theme of the Kingdom of God developed. We posted all of the sermons online about a day after they were given. The home office videos were also played on Friday, with the welcome video on opening night.

The only activities we had were a young adults/teen study which Sheldon Sitter conducted and two Festival youth instruction classes by Susan Davis, a school teacher. One highlight was when a moose walked past us during Festival youth instruction when the kids were outside. We were also blessed to have two baptisms.

We had no coffee service, but we did buy bottled water which was available by the two entrances. People were generous with donations and they covered all the cost of the water and masks. We also had a collection box available for three days of the Feast so people could donate to the local food bank. Also, we had a Holy Day offering box at the entrance on both the Holy Days before and after services, so no offering baskets were passed around. The housing survey was done after the Feast by email.

Here are a few overall comments from the survey forms:

- The location was fantastic, very quiet and picturesque. ★★
- God definitely placed His hand over the site and blessed the speaking and fellowship. ★
- Well-planned Feast, even with the cumbersome health restrictions in place. A real blessing to still be able to gather for worship, praise and encouragement! ★

Rainer Salomaa

Kelowna, British Columbia (Satellite)

Planning for the Feast in British Columbia was an interesting venture this year. Osoyoos Lake started out being the first UCG Feast site worldwide to fill up to capacity—then fell to a mere 50 people in attendance by Feast time as we needed to comply with provincial restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We all watched in amaze-

ment how this horrible virus took over the world and did not stop at the church doors. Services shut down around the world and even impacted the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. After observing Pentecost at home, we all took a long look down the road to autumn and held our breath for just a moment. Could this pandemic actually threaten the Feast of Tabernacles, or at least impact it in some way? Many of us were already getting the sense that it was probable. Throughout most of the summer we refrained from committing to any changes. But by the beginning of August it was clear that we would have to alter our Feast plans.

Complying to provincial orders restricting any gathering to 50 people was like getting handed a shoebox and being told everything in the room must somehow fit inside. Obviously, that could not be done. So, we had no choice but to spread out. In British Columbia we opted to open two additional satellite sites; raising the effective capacity to 150. As 87 registered Americans could not now join us because of a federal border closure, and as some from out-of-province remained home, that number was sufficient. Feast coordinator David Palmer opened Surrey near Vancouver. And assistant coordinator Wayne Ward opened Kelowna, a 2-hour drive north of Osoyoos. With the valuable organizational talents of Karen Erickson and Sue Morgan in Kelowna, Wayne was able to stay in Osoyoos to manage the services. With the IT expertise of Jeff Anderson, we provided a webcast which was then a vital link for Kelowna and many others who were not able to attend in-person services because of the restrictions and the cancellation of other provincial Feast sites.

So, despite the challenges, the Feast went on and was enjoyed by all, and was just as spiritually enriching as if we were at any site in any normal year. No large activity gatherings were planned. Rather, families and small groups of friends went out to enjoy the area attractions of boating, golfing, horseback riding, winery tours, go-karting and even just hanging out around the pool with brethren. It turns out you don't need a lot. If you are able to enjoy the love of even just a few brethren at this time, you have it all.

Wayne Ward

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

This year three churches—North Battleford and Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, and Lethbridge in Alberta—joined to keep the Feast. This year's Feast was unique in that we also had to focus on abiding by the Saskatchewan COVID-19 guidelines.

The Feast began with 37 attendees meeting in a beautifully decorated hall that was large enough for safe services and meals together. We were blessed with live special music every day, which was both emotional and inspiring. We also had live speakers for both the sermonettes and sermons. The theme of the sermonettes and the sermon series walked us through God's plan for the Millennium and beyond. Learning about our future destiny, hope and rule with Jesus Christ was built on each day. Added blessings were near-perfect weather every day of the Feast and the beautiful fall scenery.

We planned safe activities to do as a group. The activities included an indoor/outdoor games afternoon, a road rally through the beautiful countryside around Saskatoon and a trip to a youth Bible camp. Activities at the camp included, among other things, a couple of corn mazes, a petting zoo, potato cannons, a hay ride, peddle go-karts and a life size replica of the tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness. On Friday afternoon we had a film festival comprised of various short clips of inspirational real-life stories.

This year's Feast was a wonderful, intimate Feast due to our small group. Everyone got to know each other much better. It was like a happy family get-together. Sadly, a few of our members were unable to attend due to age and illness and were noticeably missed.

Larry DeLong

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador (Satellite)

The Feast of Tabernacles at the local Feast site in historic St. John's proved to be a positive and uplifting experience despite the COVID-19 restrictions. In all, 22 of us from the "Atlantic Bubble" assembled with social distancing and masks in a local hotel and re-

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St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

ceived the webcast from the Panama City Beach, Florida, Feast site. For the most part the technology worked well for us. We appreciated being able to view the Faces and Places segments of the webcast before each service.

The various speakers at the Panama City Beach Festival site gave us a rich smorgasbord of our future in the soon-coming Kingdom of God, as emphasized by our president, Victor Kubik, in his address to us on that subject. We experienced a taste of the unity and peace that will eventually abound on this earth.

At our local site we enjoyed activities designed for all ages, gathering at a local Lions Club for a family day. There was no traditional "Jiggs Dinner" this year; instead it was COVID-style—bring your own lunch. Cage Bingo, word games and a sing-along filled out our evening.

Other activities during the Feast included a pre-service meal at Swiss Chalet on the first day, an afternoon of bowling, the indoor adventure park and visits to some provincial sites. There was also time to enjoy our spectacular coastal views. The younger children spent lots of time in the outdoors at our local parks feeding the ducks and enjoying the play equipment. Since we were restricted by the "Atlantic Bubble," being able to keep the Feast online as a group was a real blessing in many ways.

On the Eighth Day we rounded out the Festival by enjoying a meal together between services provided by the restaurant in the hotel where services were held. Many thanks to all who made the Feast go so smoothly.

Ellsworth and Dorothy Stanley

Vancouver, British Columbia

Brethren from Greater Vancouver and Victoria, Vancouver Island, attended the Feast in Surrey, British Columbia, a suburb of Vancouver. The high attendance was 25 on the Eighth Day/Last Great Day with a daily average of 20 people.

Services went smoothly and the technology worked very well using an overhead projector aligned with a new Mac. Virtual choir presentations and Victor Kubik's Feast message were of high quality for audio and video.

Messages were inspiring, instructive and exhortative. The

speakers were David Palmer, an elder, Peter Corrigan and deacons Richard Shiundu and Dale Craniford, David Lawrence, and Andrae Dennis. On Oct. 8, services had to be canceled due to BC Hydro's shutting power to the neighborhood for maintenance purposes. In the absence of live services, Surrey attendees could connect to a webcast from British Columbia's main site in Osoyoos.

Feast social activities in Surrey were highlighted by a Monday visit to the White Rock beachside restaurant followed by a beautiful oceanside walk, a fun Tuesday afternoon of mini golf and an enjoyable session of bowling on Wednesday. There were other opportunities for food and fellowship at restaurants conveniently located near our church building.

Many thanks to pastor David Palmer and his wife Ghyslaine for their hard work and success in coordinating the Feast amid unique challenges due to COVID-19.

With assistance from several of the local brethren, the smaller but intimate site in Surrey made for a very spiritually uplifting Festival in this strange year of the pandemic.

David Palmer and Dale Craniford

Venise-en-Québec

We were deeply blessed to hold the Feast of Tabernacles in Venise-en-Québec for 2020. The temperature was clement and the tree colors astounding.

Each day we were able to gather in the common rooms to get precious spiritual and physical nourishment. People had eight days to get to know each other respectfully and joyfully as we shared hopes and dreams about the Kingdom of God. We had an average attendance of 25 plus 6-8 other persons being present by video conference every day.

Different people prepared meals for each of the days of the Feast. Attendees contributed by preparing dishes, giving a financial contribution and/or cleaning up while applying the best hygienic measures. We fellowshiped in the different living rooms, in the big dining room or in our condos. We also had a barbecue on the terraces.

Some of the members decided to help a recently arrived brother from Africa get ready for the coming winter by buying him appropriate winter clothes. We felt a spirit of generosity throughout the Feast.

We had a good variety of speakers touching on different past, present and future elements of the Feast of Tabernacles. We shared two days of video conferences with the Roquebrune-sur-Argens Feast site in France. Every day we had connections with brethren in Africa and those who stayed home in Québec.

Mr. Kubik's message on the Kingdom had a French-translation voiceover by Maryse Peworth so everyone could understand the message.

We alternated services; one day in the morning, the next in the afternoon. There was also a Bible study on Tuesday evening. One highlight was the miniature tabernacle on display in the main meeting hall. For activities, family members played pool, golf, social games, walked in nature and viewed a family movie.

These times of refreshment were deeply appreciated by our brothers and sisters, thanks to our marvelous Father.

Bruno Leclerc

Caribbean
Long Creek, Guyana

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19). One such affliction was the still raging and insidious COVID-19 pandemic.

Dedicated in their love and obedience for the Creator, the brethren in Guyana found ways and means to come together and enjoy the Feast of Tabernacles, established by God for His children. Under the leadership of deacon Clyde Chinion they were able to secure a facility in the village of Long Creek (located just outside the capital, Georgetown) where curfews and restrictions are less strictly monitored.

Though fairly challenged in comfort, eight brethren enjoyed the entirety of the Feast together. They connected with the webcast from Panama City Beach for a couple of sermons, along with some Feast sermons sent that were given in 2019.

It was indeed a greatly rewarding and enjoyable experience for all. The brethren in Guyana are dedicated to continue living the righteousness of God and being ambassadors for Christ.

Stan Braumuller

Montego Bay,
Jamaica

Blessed and joyful, about 100 brethren worshiped and fellowshiped together at the Feast of Tabernacles in Montego Bay, Jamaica, this year. Sermons, sermonettes, a Bible study and special music all tied in the theme of Habakkuk 2:14, inspiring our vision of God's glory and His powerful plan of salvation. We were also reminded of our Christian responsibility to be examples reflecting His glory.

The Hilton Rose Hall Resort, one of the few hotels currently open in Jamaica, was operating at 25 percent capacity. In this millennial setting, we enjoyed beautiful sunrises, walks on the beach and golf course, and opportunities to relax by the beautiful, blue Caribbean Sea. We had time with our families and the brethren that was even more special due to various COVID-19 restrictions and curfews meaning smaller groups.

Highlights included a baptism, ladies' mingle, widows' tea, games afternoon (Ludo, dominoes and Bingo), pre-teen Bible activity, panel seminar ("Doing Business God's Way"), teen Bible study, one day pass (for Jamaican brethren to enjoy meals and activities on the hotel property), a "best ball" golfing afternoon on the challenging Cinnamon Hill course and a buffet lunch together on the Eighth Day between services. The Hilton staff warmly welcomed us back for our fourth year, thankful for the occupancy, business and the opportunity to serve us.

Jeff and Alisa Lockhart

Soufriere, St. Lucia

There were 12 brethren who kept God's Feast of Tabernacles in Soufriere, St. Lucia, this year. Although international travel was curtailed, the UCG congregation in St. Lucia made the most of the situation during this year's fall Holy Days.

The site for this local gathering was the Leisure Inn, where brethren stayed and daily services and activities were held.

Deacon Kelland Barthelmy organized the Feast schedule of services and activities. Services alternated between live messages and joining the Jamaica webcast.

Planned activities included fishing, a picnic on the beach and a game night. Though not the Feast we had all envisioned, we thank God that the local

brethren had the opportunity to gather and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day together.

Chuck Smith

Europe/
British Isles
British Isles

Back in February we were planning a Feast in Southport for 250 people. Then came COVID-19 and, due to government restrictions, our planned Feast location became unavailable to us. Instead, we held a virtual Feast using a combination of Zoom webinar and links to the webcasts from Panama City Beach. Social events included a getting-to-know-you social using Zoom breakout rooms, ladies' Bible study, virtual quiz and photo slideshow.

We had an average service attendance of 69 connections with a peak of 76 on the first morning.

It was an interesting experience for all involved. We had to learn new skills and deal with the challenges of relying on computers and Internet connections, which did not always work as they should.

We hope and pray that we will be able to meet in person next year in Southport.

The British Isles Festival Planning Team

Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France

Despite the constant threat of COVID-19 restrictions, the brethren in France were blessed to again celebrate the Feast at the all-inclusive Club Vacancel resort in Roquebrune-sur-Argens on the French Riviera. Amazingly, the day before the Feast, local authorities implemented a rule limiting the use of meeting halls to 30 people. Even with a few last-minute cancellations, we welcomed 25 people with many more tuning into our first day and Eighth Day Zoom broadcast. Within our group, we had three people keeping the Feast for the first time and we rejoiced in having two baptized on the Eighth Day.

This year's Feast, for the first time since the 1960s, did not offer English translation of services or organized excursions. Although

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Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France

we missed our English-speaking visitors, having French-language only church services made it possible to introduce an after-church “sermon chat.” No organized excursions also allowed brethren more flexibility in choosing activities more tailored to the group. Although small, everyone was “all-in” with nightly group activities, which included a team-based, interactive Bible study into the subject of humanity, an elaborate game show competition organized by some of the young adults, an uplifting movie night with popcorn and a board game tournament. In the afternoons, brethren enjoyed group activities to local medieval villages and hiking in some of the most beautiful canyons and gorges in France.

We supplemented our local speakers with a Zoom church service coordinated with the francophone site in Venise-Québec, Canada, and with voice-over translations of a few sermons from 2019. The Zoom service allowed francophone brethren in Africa to join us, as well as some in France who couldn’t travel to the Feast site. Although we were sad to not have English-speaking visitors this year, many commented how special it was to celebrate the Feast together in our regular site and really draw closer together.

Tim Peabworth

Titisee, Germany

This year saw a change of Feast site for the German and Dutch-speaking brethren for the first time in more than 20 years. God provided an opportunity for 147 brethren from five countries to meet in the beautiful Black Forest town of Titisee, after a number of uncertainties due to the COVID-19 crisis meant that the Feast had to be organized at relatively short notice.

Many Dutch brethren arrived into Germany just hours before new travel restrictions were introduced, and a number of members from Austria and the Netherlands underwent COVID-19 tests before entering Germany. Despite the tense circumstances, however, the Feast was full of rejoicing and relief.

Great care was taken to ensure the safety of everyone and all the brethren respectfully complied with the health care protocols with very little inconvenience. Although there were fewer planned activities, there was a real sense

of unity present, and it seemed that more than ever, there was a great feeling of thankfulness that we could all meet together in peace. Our prayers were (and still are) with a special member of our spiritual family who couldn’t attend with us in Germany this year, Mnazakan Poghossjan, who is experiencing tragic war in his homeland of Armenia at this time.

All services were broadcast via Internet radio for those members who were unable to travel. The spiritual food that was served offered encouragement, hope and a call to action, as well as painting a picture of the Millennium to point our eyes ahead. Hymn *summen* (humming) was enhanced by a talented group of musicians; special music was beautiful and uplifting and fellowship after services was jovial and lengthy, despite the requirement of face-masks in the meeting hall.

There is something very awe-inspiring about the natural beauty of the Black Forest region and that beauty was enhanced by days of light rain, cleansing the air and creating mists rising over the Titisee Lake and surrounding forest-clad hills. God willing, the Feast of Tabernacles will again be celebrated in Titisee in 2021.

Claire Kasper

Sabaudia, Italy

The Feast of Tabernacles has been celebrated in Italy, for the 20th year now, at the Oasi di Kuffra Hotel on the western coast of Sabaudia. This grand accommodation brought the Feast directly to the beachfront where brethren were blessed with the Mediterranean Sea as their neighbor and a united fellowship with one another.

Despite the current climate of confusion we’ve witnessed around the world in 2020, the Feast in Italy felt completely untouched and provided all 90 members a truly joyous release from this; quite unlike ever before, it seemed to perfectly depict the true splendor of God’s Kingdom to come.

The first day nurtured a loving harmony between our Italian hosts and visiting Feastgoers through the welcome of great warmth we received. An inspiring spirit of family love was demonstrated by the Italian brethren, through the sermons given and fellowship afterwards. We were presented with powerful messages on this day, focusing on the true meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles and on setting our vision

firmly ahead—our path aligned with Christ. This set the tone in understanding the importance of actively striving to demonstrate, individually and as a body, the light of Jesus in a world encompassed by darkness.

In conclusion to the first Holy Day, we shared a generous meal together in the dining area overlooking the ocean and setting sun. With four courses at both lunch and dinner, we can certainly say our hosts at the hotel took great care of us all.

Although the planned excursions were unable to take place this year, many members instead got together and organized small trips, beach activities and nights spent teaching each other card games, which became interactive and inclusive forms of fellowship, strengthening our relationships with one another.

We also held a talent show and dance evening, which were full to the brim with rejoicing. We were all able to participate and delight in the array of music, dance routines and variety of talents displayed on these nights.

One of the highlights of the Feast was the collective marriage ceremony of three couples which the whole church was invited to be a part of! It was such a refreshing and jubilant experience for all who attended; an event most have never observed at the Feast before. In addition to this celebration, we welcomed 10 new members into the Church through baptisms, which was uplifting for all brethren in Italy.

The Eighth Day/Last Great Day ignited a spirit of true unity amongst members as we were reminded in the messages of our important purpose which the Lord has set out for us; to prepare ourselves for the coming of His Kingdom to earth and the eventual fulfillment of our duties in the family of God. We look forward to returning to Italy to celebrate God’s Feast again.

Grace Langford

Kiev, Ukraine

Our original plan was to travel to Estonia for the Feast of Tabernacles, but because of the travel ban that did not happen. So, we turned to plan B and traveled to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. We were blessed to spend time with family and friends. Among those who attended the Feast were the Boise family, two sisters from the Chernov region and one per-

son from the Lviv region (six people total). In the mornings we listened to sermons and read the Scriptures; in the afternoons we had many different activities. Together we visited museums, parks and historical places. It was special time for everyone and we all felt spirituality renewed and refreshed by the Feast of Tabernacles this year.

Miroslava Boise

Latin America

Maloca de Moscou, Brazil

The Feast was held in the newly built church pavilion sponsored by Good Works with 38 members attending. The brethren stayed in temporary camps outside their homes or in other brethren’s homes and are very grateful for all the assistance they have received. The children received toys and gifts sponsored by some brethren in the States, and they displayed large thank-you cards in a photo to the brethren. Additionally, there were a number of brethren in Brazil who could not attend the Feast in person due to COVID-19. Some attended virtually, connecting to Chile.

Jorge de Campos

Spanish-Speaking Latin America

Due to the situation that the world is in, it was decided to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day in a collaborative agreement between the countries of Chile and Mexico.

Online services were transmitted daily. The mutual support was edifying and beneficial, especially with the participation of a few new faces of songleaders, those giving prayers and the tech team behind the scenes.

There was significant prior work by singers and musicians to prepare special music selections for each day. Kids, teens and adults participated with voices and instruments to honor God. During the Feast, five children received the blessing of little children from their ministers and a new member of God’s family in Chile was joyfully announced.

The technical effort to deliver multiple connections for services and activities was a team success for the members’ benefit. The platforms used were Envivo

for the official webcast page, YouTube, Facebook Live, Roku and Zoom. Zoom especially helped the brethren to feel more united and connected since they were able to see each other. After each service, many spontaneously unmuted their microphones and interacted with one another, reducing the great physical distances between each other by feeling the same spirit. The platforms for connection as well as the telephone dial-in option were sufficient for an average of 101 daily connections, with YouTube being a favorite among brethren. An estimated 300 individuals watched the services daily through more than 100 connections.

After careful consideration, Zoom was used for the activities aspect of the Feast. Children’s Sabbath School was held on the first Sabbath with another special activity on Sunday during the Feast. In addition to the Festival activity booklets, there were other materials created and distributed in the two countries so that the little ones and their families had more activities to enjoy. The teens had an activity and their own Bible study as well. During the women’s activity on Wednesday, 58 women from various countries participated and thoroughly enjoyed a time just for them.

There were three family-focused activities organized: on the first Sabbath afternoon there was an entertaining welcome activity, followed by a talent show during the week and also another enjoyable family afternoon that included various skill tests. Additionally, there were two opportunities for official photographs.

One important production to highlight was the presentation of about 100 videos submitted by brethren. Just a simple “happy Feast” in front of the camera with a cup of coffee represented the shared best wishes from the members to one another, including Victor Kubik and others from the church webcast in Cincinnati that gladly participated.

This video can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/LatinAmericaFOT>.

Several other countries participated in some of the activities including Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Guatemala. All the effort of the team involved, which included four ministers, wouldn’t have had such a big impact without the excitement and energy of the members.

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Spanish-speaking Latin America

Those who spent the Feast alone or were in small groups of two or more families received spiritual food and felt the brotherly love of the Body of Christ. Many thanks to the churches of Chile and Mexico for having participated in an unprecedented Feast of Tabernacles, and especially thanks to God. May He grant us wisdom to continue celebrating the Feast wherever He chooses to place us.

Mario Seiglie

United States

Berlin, Ohio
(Satellite)

Beautiful Amish Country in Berlin, Ohio, provided a millennial setting for 152 individuals keeping the Feast of Tabernacles this year. The fall foliage on the rolling hills of Holmes County and nice weather provided the perfect setting for this “Feast of Promise.” Services were held at the Berlin Grande Hotel and a big tent in the parking lot for adequate space to socially distance.

The uplifting, God-focused special music was very much appreciated. Messages followed the theme of God’s awesome promises as the meaning of the Holy Days was highlighted. Daily evening Bible studies and fellowship hours made this Feast very personable and friendly. The local radio station, WKLM, broadcast the Berlin Feast of Tabernacles as well, and approximately 40 unique visitors from the community came throughout the week to learn more about the Feast days. Some of them joined us for BBQ dinners on the “Pavilion of Promise” followed by Bible studies on the Sabbath and on Sunday afternoon.

Attendees had opportunities to visit the Amish Country Theater for a comedy show, learn about the history of the Amish and Mennonites at the Behalt Museum, feed the safari animals at The Farm in Walnut Creek, and browse at the famous Lehman’s Hardware store where items like those their grandparents used can still be purchased. The many local shops provided plenty of opportunities to enjoy Swiss cheese, homemade chocolates, crafts, baked goods and more.

Though this Feast site came late in the planning phase, it was quite clear that God placed His name at the Berlin Grande for His Feast of Tabernacles this

year. The staff at the hotel complemented us as the “nicest big group” they have hosted.

The farewell fellowship on the Eighth Day gave additional time to chat and appreciate each other. May we continue to glorify our great God and may He bless and keep us all until next year.

Susan Miller

Big Sandy, Texas

Approximately 50 brethren rejoiced at the Feast site in Big Sandy in our own beautiful church building. All services this year were live. Dr. Donald Ward and Dr. Howard Baker gave messages with pastors Dan Dowd and Frank McCrady driving up from New Braunfels to provide sermons on Wednesday and Thursday. Members appreciated the opportunity to receive MP3 copies of all sermons.

All were able to fellowship with coffee and individually wrapped snacks in our building before services. In addition, there were opportunities for lunches and fellowship in an outdoor setting after services.

A special attendee this year was Anne Elliott, who has attended the Feast for 72 years. Her first Feast was at Belknap Springs, Oregon, in 1949. It is a joy to Anne that 35 of her family members attend a Church of God on a regular basis. Toward the end of the Feast she stated that this was the best one she has ever attended.

Sarah Baker

Branson, Missouri

Coordinating the Feast of Tabernacles in Branson, Missouri, during COVID-19 was not without some major challenges. However, our great God answered the many prayers of the brethren and we were blessed in ways almost too numerous to count.

First, we were unable to use the venue we have rented for years because the restrictions on social distancing would not allow spaced seating for the numbers we had registered. After determining we would probably not be able to hold the Feast in Branson this year, a call was received offering the use of the Mansion Theatre, which would seat more than 2,000, with plenty of room to seat everyone following the local ordinances regarding the pandem-

ic. This venue also had several separate rooms where we were able to have teen Bible studies, youth classes and office space for department heads.

With about two months to get organized, the blessings continued to be obvious. Our list of needs for volunteers was quickly filled. During the Feast, a man needing assistance getting from his hotel to the theater had many offering to help him.

The theater’s staff were accommodating, complimentary of the brethren and invited us back for next year’s Feast! Services on the first day were attended by 561 excited brethren who chose to be where God placed His name, despite the ongoing conditions affecting us today. Special music by those attending in Branson, whether vocalists or musicians was outstanding this year! The three song leaders did a commendable job warmly welcoming all and leading us in singing praises to our great God.

The local florist we have used for years did a beautiful job decorating a much larger stage. It was almost like she knew this was a much-needed time of celebrating and refreshing for our group. For the Eighth Day, we added white flowers to represent the meaning of this special time.

Inspiring messages included a sermon by Jim Tuck, comparing our spiritual lives to the pioneers settling this nation. Randy Urwiller spoke on the unveiling of truth that God does for those He calls today, and then for the entire world in the Millennium.

Various activities had to be planned taking into consideration the local restrictions. For family day, we had a picnic in a local state park and everyone brought their own meals. We were able to be mask-less for the afternoon in a wonderful outdoor setting. Jamie Justice and crew handed out gift bags with an animal mask theme that included a lot of treats for those 12 and under to enjoy at the picnic.

We cannot overstate how cooperative and consistent brethren were in attendance, in giving generous offerings on the Holy Days and with their donations for the Families Helping Families.

The gentleman giving the closing prayer of the Festival said it best, “God, you did it! Your Feast was a blessing to all of us!”

Joe and Pat Dobson

Cincinnati, Ohio

About 280 brethren gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day. The cool, sunny autumn weather and the warmth of fellowship provided an atmosphere of peace during the Feast.

Messages focused on the hope and comfort that the Holy Days represent, rejoicing even through suffering and how to prepare ourselves to be effective people that God can use, both now and in the future.

Activities included a teen pizza party, bowling on family day, sand volleyball, youth instruction classes, a tour of the home office in Milford and a painted rock hunt for kids. People also visited local attractions such as the Creation Museum, Ark Encounter and Newport Aquarium. Bible studies were held for adults, young adults and teens on Thursday night.

At services each day, masks did not muffle the joyful noise during hymns or cool the fervor of the brethren who came to joyfully worship the King (Zechariah 14:16). In fact, it seemed nothing could dampen the Feast experience in Cincinnati! Due to local restrictions, we did not hold the annual seniors’ banquet. Instead, special gift baskets were put together and a ceremony planned to hand them out. Before the ceremony, shocking news arrived. After all Church members had left the hall for the day, someone had broken into the facility in which the gift baskets were being kept. Everything was gone. The news shook us, and reminded us that while we celebrated the coming millennial reign of Jesus, that time was not here yet. Satan was not yet bound, and sin still abounded in the world.

However, we didn’t allow this to dampen our spirits. We turned to God for help with this unfortunate event and something remarkable happened. In the way that only God can, a mighty miracle was performed through the generosity of the brethren. A donation box was placed on the information table and in less than a day more than \$3,300 was raised. Festival coordinator Ryan Hall noted that God tells us to spend our second tithe on whatever our hearts desire (Deuteronomy 14:26)—and the selfless desire in the hearts of the people in Cincinnati this year was evident. In true “loaves and fishes” style, we witnessed what God means by blessing us “exceedingly abundantly” (Ephesians 3:20).

There were more gift baskets than seniors and special gifts were handed out to the oldest person, the person who had been baptized the longest and the person with the most generations in the Church.

This object lesson set an encouraging tone for the rest of the week as we rejoiced before God, fellowshiped together and looked forward to an even better future.

Ariana Del Signore

Daytona Beach, Florida

Daytona Beach, with its miles of beautiful white sand beaches, oceanfront hotels, condominiums, homes and plentiful restaurants, was a new site for the Feast of Tabernacles this year.

The location and God’s people made this site a wonderful place to be, but events that led up to the Feast, and occurrences during and after the Feast showed us that God indeed was with us and had placed His name here.

Daily church services were held in the spacious (94,000 square feet) Exhibition Hall of the Ocean Center, and were marked by outstanding sermons, tremendous live and video special music, and warm fellowship. The venue was the perfect place for the Feast held during the pandemic, as social distancing and seating distancing were easily achievable and available to the 687 people who came to this site.

For those who preferred to wear masks the entire time, a separate room was provided, with services streamed in live from the main hall.

Throughout the Feast, God’s hand was evident in our meeting and gathering. Leading up to the Feast, the Ocean Center had moved us from the original space for which we had contracted to the much larger Exhibition Hall. During that time, all other events scheduled at the Center canceled, leaving us as the only group that was meeting there for the entire Feast. It seemed that God had cleared the center for us.

In addition to daily services, youth education classes, a “dinner and Bible studies” evening and family day were scheduled. Family day was held at the adja-

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Daytona Beach, Florida

cent Daytona Lagoon water park and amusement center. The city had approved a private party for the Church with up to 500 attendees. Families enjoyed an afternoon of water slides, a water park, endless arcade games, go-karts, mini golf, a ropes course and other attractions.

God's favor was evident in our ability to schedule family day and He literally "shone" His presence on us that day. After three straight days of overcast skies and rain, the forecast for family day was the same. But, as we awoke on that morning, the sun was shining. Even Ocean Center personnel commented on the unexpected sun that then remained for the rest of the Feast.

To make this Feast even more memorable and a tribute to God, we saw Him turn tragedy into victory. At the end of the Feast, a Church member's heart literally stopped beating Friday night, for no apparent reason. Over the next several days, after she was revived (after having been without a heartbeat for 20 minutes or more) she lay unconscious on a ventilator in a local hospital. On the Tuesday after the Feast, with so many praying for her, God opened her eyes. She has made a miraculous recovery, acknowledged even by the nurses who told her husband, "These things don't happen. This is a miracle." Praise God.

The summary for the Feast in Daytona? God is with us. To Him be the glory forever and ever.

Rick Shabi

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

More than 600 brethren came together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful Smoky Mountains in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, this year. When the original site in Lake Junaluska had to be canceled, the Rocky Top Sports World venue was chosen as the alternate site to hold this year's Feast. Although the venue is an indoor and outdoor sport facility, it served as an ideal place to keep the Feast. Our high attendance was 640 and most of the usual Feast activities were held. The senior luncheon and annual dance had to be canceled because of COVID-19 restrictions, but we were able to have many enjoyable activities for the various age groups.

A singles' dinner, a teen activ-

ity at Ober Gatlinburg, family day and youth lessons highlighted daily activities along with services each day. On Friday evening we held three Bible studies: one for teens, one for young adults and one general Bible study for others.

We also had a service project for a local food bank where a significant number of non-perishable items were donated to the Gatlinburg community. The members stepped up to support the various activities, with many smiling faces despite the requirement to wear masks while attending services. There was also a section upstairs for those with medical conditions, which made the site inclusive for certain ones who could not wear a mask.

We had many speakers giving encouraging and inspiring messages. Many expressed appreciation for the support of the staff at the Rocky Top Sports World. I feel that almost everyone who attended Gatlinburg for the Feast this year returned to their various homes with positive and encouraging memories. The Feast in Gatlinburg was an uplifting time as we remembered God's promise to never leave or forsake us.

Stan Martin

Glacier Country, Montana

God blessed the Feast of Tabernacles in Glacier Country, Montana, with some of the best fall weather anyone could remember. Even the locals talked about how wonderful it was. Cool mountain mornings with temperatures in the 50s and highs in the upper 70s made for perfect days to fellowship and explore.

About 408 brethren were spread between four locations to accommodate for social distancing, with services being webcast to each building and room. Because of travel changes, Glacier Country had 25 elders; this included eight full-time pastors and three current Council members. With the sheer number of speakers we were blessed to have split sermon messages given for each service. We were reminded to hold fast to God's peace, His Word, His laws and His plan of salvation for all of mankind.

Glacier Country, Montana, is at the base of Glacier National Park where there are some of the most unique mountain ranges in the world. Brethren hiked along trails, visited waterfalls and viewed wildlife. Due to the

wonderfully warm weather, the Going-to-the-Sun-Road was still open and brethren were offered spectacular views going through the park and over the Continental Divide.

The setting of the Glacier Bible Camp offered a wonderful park for family day and we had an additional climbing wall brought in along with two extreme air jumpers. Since we were not able to have a family dance, brethren instead shared their talents at a family variety show. While this has been a most unusual year, with God's blessing and protection, His people were able to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and rejoice in Glacier Country, Montana.

David Jones

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

More than 270 brethren gathered in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to worship and rejoice before God. We enjoyed the blessing of nearly perfect weather while meeting under a large outdoor tent surrounded by the beauty of Amish farmlands. The swaying of the cornstalks and the occasional horse and buggy driving through town added to the calm ambiance of this delightful setting. While we had a few challenges balancing live services under the tent and those indoors watching the webcast in separate smaller rooms, we were blessed to be able to keep God's Feast safely and in peace together!

Activity highlights included a stage production of Queen Esther by the Sight and Sound Theater, a socially distanced line dance and family day at Cherry Crest Adventure Farm. A group of young adults enjoyed a renaissance fair early in the week, and a group of singles explored some local stalactite/stalagmite caverns near the end of the week. The teen activity and the senior luncheon were held outdoors at a local park where brethren also gathered to enjoy a game of kickball. As we approached the seventh day of the Feast, the state limits on indoor meetings changed just in time to allow us to hold the Friday night Bible study in person instead of by webcast-only as was originally planned. We headed home overjoyed by the uplifting live special music each day, fulfilling messages focusing on the coming peace of God's Kingdom, and the rich fellowship of our brethren.

Steven Britt and Lewis VanAusdler

New Braunfels, Texas

Despite a number of Feast sites canceled this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to once again observe God's eight day Feast in New Braunfels. There were restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus, but none of the restrictions prevented one's enjoyment of this milestone in God's plan of salvation.

This year, 322 brethren from Texas and all around the country gathered at the New Braunfels Civic Center to keep the Feast. Many were willing to contribute to the work of the Feast. Brethren served in an attitude of humility and cooperation to create a millennial atmosphere that made it a time of refreshing for all (Acts 3:18-21). Daily messages pointed us to the coming Kingdom of God. Messages focused upon the blessing of our eyes being opened to the reality of the Kingdom through Jesus Christ; enduring to the end; the right understanding of God's law; leadership; the second resurrection and other appropriate subjects in keeping with the Feast. The daily messages were enhanced by a variety of virtual music, individual presentations and family groups.

Preteens enjoyed two classes geared to their grade level focusing on the race we are running as God's people. Adults and teens also enjoyed Bible studies geared to further enhance our understanding of God's truth.

Due to restrictions there were fewer group activities, but we were able to hold a few events. The teens and their families enjoyed rides, games and go-karts at ZDT Amusement Park. We also enjoyed Natural Bridge Caverns: the cave walk, canopy challenge and ziplines; panning for gemstones at the mining sluice; and running the outdoor maze. Finally, we were able to safely enjoy the senior citizen's luncheon full of good food and fellowship.

God blessed the gathering for the Feast in New Braunfels with good weather, a beautiful gathering place, profitable messages and great fellowship. It was another memorable year on the journey to the reality of what God reveals through the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day.

Gary Smith

Oceanside, California

The Oceanside satellite site was a blessing for all who were a part of this unique experience

in the challenging year of 2020. We normally accommodate 500-600 attendees. This year we could accommodate 75 people at our normal location in the QLN facility, and had an estimated 188 people on the Zoom line for a total estimated audience of 263 people. We had two services on the two High Days, plus an afternoon class given by Darris McNeely on discipleship principles from the book of Daniel. We also had an interactive Bible study by Jon Garnant on how to concisely share our belief system when asked. Three other Zoom services were offered for all in addition to the studies.

During the week folks loved strolling in the open fresh air of the beaches. We gathered on the eve of the Eighth Day to enjoy a pier walk together and watch the sun go down as the eighth day of the Feast arrived on the horizon. The biggest lesson in this unique year was that it's not the size of the audience that matters as much as the spiritual understanding granted us as we who have God's name placed on us worshiped our Heavenly Father and His Son in "spirit and in truth" this year, both in person and over Zoom.

Robin Webber

Panama City Beach, Florida

More than 550 brethren gathered for an inspiring and refreshing Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City Beach this year. It was truly a Festival atmosphere with the spirit of rejoicing before the Lord abounding! Services were held daily at the Edgewater Beach Resort in a beautiful millennial setting. Although a hurricane was brewing in the Gulf, God saw fit to push it past Panama City Beach, and allowed the brethren to safely enjoy the beautiful beaches, sunshine and warm temperatures of the region.

Family day was held at nearby Rock'it Lanes with roller skating, bowling and a wide variety of arcade games. Our senior members enjoyed a fantastic meal at a long-time favorite: family-owned restaurant Capt. Jack's. Teens, singles and young adults enjoyed a variety of hospitalities and get-to-know-you games. The cost of all activities was offset by the brethren's generous donation to the Family Helping Family fund.

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Panama City Beach, Florida

Most importantly, we were fed a steady diet of rich spiritual food from a wide variety of speakers. The theme of the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ was clear, as was the work that we must do both now and then. Adding to the meat of the messages each day was enthusiastic song services, special music and the virtual choirs. May God speed the day when the whole earth gathers together to rejoice before Him!

Dan Preston

Pewaukee, Wisconsin

More than 160 brethren kept the Feast of Tabernacles in the quaint and fall-colored town of Pewaukee, Wisconsin. We had an average of 30 online connections as well.

Brethren were hungry, both physically and spiritually. Either at the onsite restaurant or after a quick drive to the number of delicious area restaurants, brethren enjoyed feasting on physical food together. Spiritually, there was much to chew, too. Five Bible studies were scheduled at the start of the Feast. After the teen Bible study early in the week, the teens voted to add yet another Bible study. With six Bible studies and a cornucopia of delicious spiritual food each day of the Feast and the Last Great Day/Eighth Day, the spiritual food really was the star of the show.

Many brethren said this was the best Feast yet, despite all of the ups and downs that surrounded making plans for the Feast this year. Masks and social distancing also didn't stop most from participating in four different group meals at the Ingleside Hotel and an exciting family game night. Three teams battled it out in a nail-biting game of Bible Jeopardy while others dove into board and card games. The Feast was enhanced with visits to Pewaukee Lake and lovely scenic drives to take in the colorful and changing leaves.

Pewaukee, Wisconsin, did not disappoint, but, most importantly, God's blessing was protecting us and leading us each step of the way as we kept His command to rejoice and celebrate the much-anticipated coming Millennium. God speed that day.

Andy Duran

Rapid City, South Dakota

A small, restricted Feast site had been originally planned in Rapid City for 2020. But that changed almost overnight when a request was made to open the site to all who wished to attend there. Plans were quickly made to accommodate a much larger crowd. Those plans became more complicated when a new meeting place had to be found less than three weeks before the Feast! But everything came together and 325 brethren sat down to begin observing the Feast on the opening evening. Thereafter, daily attendance averaged 413 over the next eight days. The opening message encouraged everyone to seek rest and rejuvenation from the stress of the unusual year they had experienced. Looking after each other and encouraging one another was also emphasized. God's people rose to the occasion. Men were assigned to lead songs and deliver sermonettes, sermons and Bible studies, but time did not allow extra activities to be planned ahead of time.

Many people organized picnics, hikes and a car-pool trip to Mt. Rushmore. The family day activity at Reptile Gardens was a big success. A dance was even organized for teens and young adults. Evening fellowship was available in the hall for those who simply wanted to enjoy quiet time together. Others enjoyed private drives out into the beautiful Black Hills. All of the outdoor activities were enhanced by some of the most beautiful weather Rapid City has ever had in October.

Beautiful special music was presented each day by soloists and small family groups. The virtual choir presentations recorded by the home office team were also much appreciated. And most important of all was the continuing education provided by the speakers. The messages and Bible studies were especially encouraging to help everyone focus on and prepare for the Kingdom of God.

Generous donations were made for the "Families Helping Families" program. The offerings taken on the High Days were also generous, showing great thankfulness to God and support for His work.

As the Feast drew to a close, many comments were made expressing thanks to those who worked so hard to make the Feast successful with last minute planning. Above all else, greatest

thanks were expressed to God our Father and Jesus Christ for giving us so much favor in a tumultuous year. A final thank you must be given to all who showed great respect and love by staying away from services if they sensed any sign of illness. This helped others stay healthy.

Ken Skorseth

Soldotna, Alaska (Satellite)

A small satellite Feast of Tabernacles site was conducted in Soldotna, Alaska, this year. Soldotna is located down the Kenai Peninsula, about 150 miles southwest of Anchorage. We had 50 registered but two families were affected by COVID-19 and had to quarantine at home. This held our attendance to the low 30s each day. We rented a venue in Soldotna called the Lone Moose Lodge. Some commuted from their homes and others stayed in cabins on the Lone Moose property or nearby. We had just enough speakers to have live messages except for the home office videos. It was a wonderful Feast together in Alaska this year.

David Dobson

Stewartville, Minnesota (Satellite)

The current uncertainty and precautions left several Midwest brethren without a feasible destination to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Earlier in the year, a facility was contacted for a possible satellite site but was unavailable. As states and venues shut down, opened and shut down again, the facility at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Rochester, Minnesota became the destination we called, "Simply Wonderful!" It became possible for 33 of us to keep God's Feast in a physical setting that had the beauty of a painted landscape. This region of the country has many gorgeous autumn colors. We hiked on the trails through the woods and enjoyed the trees in their full array. The daily temperature was perfect for campfires with sing-alongs, hot cocoa and even s'mores in the evening hours. The Ranch and facility buildings were designed for use by individuals with physical challenges, and powered chairs and riders were rented for five members who took advantage of the no-barrier opportunities. These machines allowed them to

independently explore and participate to the fullest. It was hard to keep up with their enthusiasm and speed. Over the years, UCG has benefitted from this special place known to the locals as Ironwood. It has been used for our preteen camp, winter socials, a young adults' weekend and the regional ministerial conference. Nurturing an environment that quiets the noises of life, Ironwood Ranch was built as a safe place where people can gather and build relationships, provide hope and support one another. This is what took place this Feast. The physical circumstances that brought us together were replaced with the knowledge of our spiritual future in the family of God.

Having so few of us at the large facility allowed for physical distancing required by the state of Minnesota. Temperatures were taken before daily services with masks on and lots of extra room. All of this space did not deter the wonderful fellowship time we had. We all gathered in the dining hall for lunch and evening meals prepared by 2-3 Ironwood staff members to help reduce possible COVID-19 exposure. Most of us stayed in the Miracle Lodge but one couple camped onsite. On our last evening together, we enjoyed a wagon ride through the winding woody trails, ending with a campfire cookout.

Despite the circumstances that brought us together, God used them to His advantage to help grow the family relationships He desires for us. Our days were spent together, starting with a cup of coffee and rousing conversation, then daily worship services, meals and activities. Everyone willingly served according to their individual talents. We also put three work parties together to clean windows, stain the logs on the outside of the chapel and split wood for the fireplaces at Ironwood. Everyone agreed this was the best Feast ever. As we said goodbye, it was evident in our relaxed faces and big smiles that our time together had been "Simply Wonderful."

Peggy Yule

St. George, Utah

A first ever Feast site for the United Church of God, more than 1,000 attended scenic St. George, Utah. An overwhelming number of members requested we return to this location, demonstrating how popular and enjoyable this site was. Zion Na-

tional Park and four nearby state parks provided ample opportunity to appreciate God's creation.

The teens took advantage of Snow Canyon Park with more than 100 hiking it after a pizza lunch. Young adults gathered in a city park for outdoor games, food and fellowship. The entire convention center was available to us, allowing ample room for social distancing. Most attendees stayed in homes and condos with kitchen units while some stayed at nearby hotels. Many hosted drop-ins with so many having kitchens.

All messages were both Millennium- and God-oriented, and relevant to all ages. The volunteers contributed with exceptional service to make the logistics all work out for a site that was only finalized about month beforehand. The sound crew overcame challenges so this site could webcast daily services to about a thousand more people. Many commented on their preference for the larger site and running into friends they hadn't seen in years.

Charles Melear

Tucson, Arizona

Tucson, Arizona, served as a Festival location for the 57th consecutive year, as either an official or satellite Feast site. In 1973, families observed the Feast at the Tucson Community Center, one of the first convention centers built in the United States.

This year, more than 100 people gathered to observe the Feast, hearing sermons such as; "The Thousand Year Foundation of God's Kingdom," "How Can You Use Me in the Kingdom?," "Parole or Pardon?," "The Symbolism of Tabernacles," and "The New Heavens and New Earth." Despite limited attendance, many different areas of the United States were represented in Tucson. Members also enjoyed the interactive "Chat With the Messenger" after each service, with audience members engaging with the speakers about the message presented each day.

Despite COVID-19 closures, a number of local attractions such as the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum were open and enjoyed by members. Avid golfers enjoyed dinner and an evening at Top Golf. Members enjoyed the relaxed pace of a small site, becoming well acquainted with one another during the eight days.

Steve Buchanan UN



Angola



Cameroon



Winneba, Ghana



Meru, Kenya



Migori, Kenya



Mossel Bay, South Africa



Blantyre, Malawi



Ndanai, Kenya



Eastern Zambia



Chemba, Zimbabwe



Lusaka, Zambia



Nkhwazi, Malawi

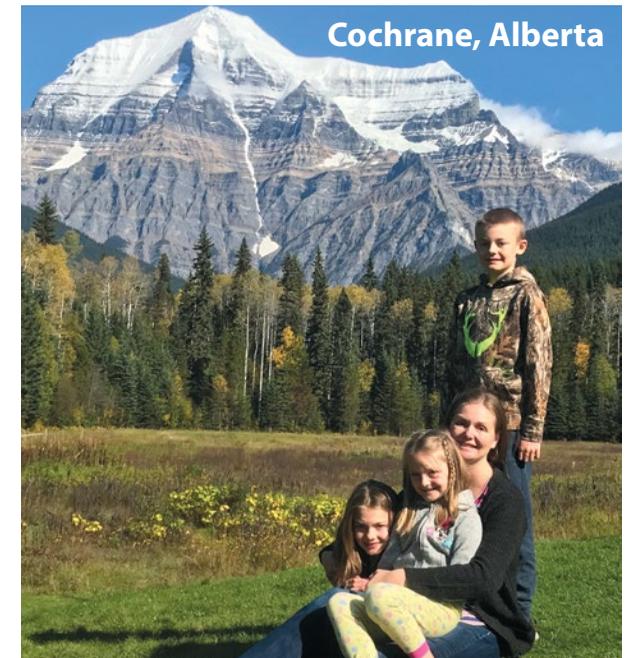


Mapoko, Zambia



Mufulira, Zambia

14 Feast Photos: Asia/Pacific, Canada, Caribbean, Latin America





Long Creek, Guyana



Kiev, Ukraine



Montego Bay, Jamaica



Mexico-Chile



Soufriere, St. Lucia



Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France



Titisee, Germany



Bolivia



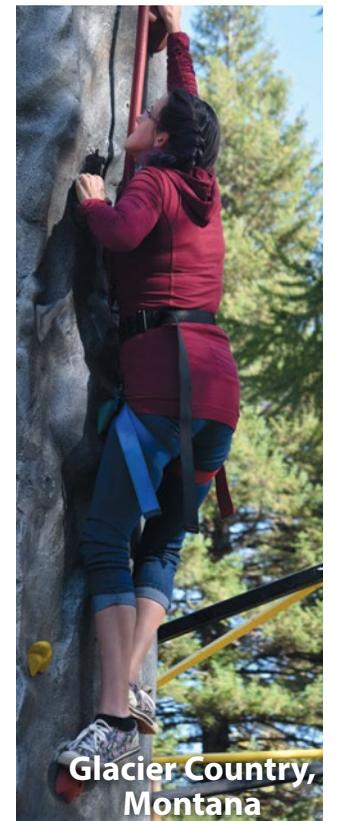
Guatemala



Sabaudia, Italy



Maloca de Moscou, Brazil



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Jonah, God's Work and Us

The prophet Jonah lived in difficult times, just as we do today.

By 800 B.C., Israel had steadily suffered military oppression by the Syrians and by the superpower in the region, Assyria. Despite two centuries of sinful kings, idolatry and disobedience to God after Solomon's death, God declared through Jonah that He would extend mercy to Israel because He remembered His pledge not to totally destroy them for His name's sake (2 Kings 14:25-27). It was during Jeroboam II's reign that He did this, even though Jeroboam II "did what was evil in the LORD's sight" (2 Kings 14:24, New Living Translation). God used him powerfully to save Israel, showing that He can use even a spiritually flawed man to carry out His will out of love for His people. Eventually Assyria came directly against Israel, requiring them to pay an enormous tribute to avoid being invaded, and making the king a puppet ruler—an arrangement the Israelites detested (2 Kings 15:19-20).

In the midst of this oppression, God asked the prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with a warning of destruction if they didn't repent of their evil deeds. We can learn important lessons from the book of Jonah about how God operates through His Work. Let's take a closer look.

Jonah's calling and initial reaction

The account begins: "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me'" (Jonah 1:1-3). But Jonah fled on a ship bound for the opposite end of the world, Tarshish. A freakish storm arose and was about to destroy the ship, when the anguished sailors drew lots to see who caused the storm, revealing that Jonah was the guilty one. At Jonah's urging, they reluctantly threw him overboard and the



It took a storm at sea and three days in the belly of a fish for Jonah to obey God's command to prophesy to Nineveh.

storm ended. Jonah was swallowed up by a great fish specially prepared by God. After three days and three nights, the fish vomited him on the shore (Jonah 2:10). Miraculously spared, he was repentant and thankful (Jonah 2:9). Once on land, he again received his marching orders from God (Jonah 3:2). It's no wonder that this time around, he obeyed right away!

In Nineveh, he proclaims God's message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4)! What happens next is simply astounding. The Ninevites repented and declared a city-wide fast (Jonah 3:5-9). As a result of their conscientious repentance, "God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10).

Jonah's anger

Was Jonah pleased that they had heard his warning and were spared? Absolutely not! Instead he was infuriated that God had forgiven them (Jonah 4:1-3)! The story ends with God raising a large plant that protects Jonah from the scorching sun, but then He destroys it and Jonah is heartbroken. God contrasts Jonah's pity for the plant with his indifference to God having spared Nineveh: "This plant grew up in one night and disappeared the next; you didn't do anything for it and you didn't make it grow—yet you feel sorry for it! How much more, then, should I have pity

on Nineveh, that great city. After all, it has more than 120,000 innocent children in it, as well as many animals" (Jonah 4:10-12, Good News Translation)!

Two-stage judgment

We thus see that God's judgment normally consists of two stages: First, the stage when He shows mercy during a period of possible repentance. This period can be short-term for a nation being judged, but in the long-run, it means God will extend His mercy up to the end-time events, when He will decisively intervene in world affairs. As 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

In the second stage, wickedness reaches a certain threshold and the warning message has not been heeded. As it says in Daniel 8:23 about the end-time, "When the end of those kingdoms is near and they have become so wicked that they must be punished" (GNT). In fact, the book of Nahum describes what later happened to the people of Nineveh: they went back to their wicked ways and were totally destroyed around 612 B.C.

Our role today

It is now one of our primary missions to get out a warning message, which also includes hope, to the world. As Jesus said: "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world

as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Yes, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is very good news, but as the context of Matthew 24 shows, there will be very difficult times ahead before Christ returns. Moreover, in Revelation 10:5-7 and Revelation 11:18, we see God finally intervening in world affairs and ultimately establishing the Kingdom of God.

Four action steps

In conclusion, we can learn a lot from Jonah, that initially reluctant prophet, about how God judges and acts. Here are four actions steps we can take.

1. *We should understand the stage we are in, for there is still time for the world to repent!* Meanwhile, we are to help get the gospel of the Kingdom out and aid in preparing the people who do repent so they can be part of that coming Kingdom.

2. *Don't be glad to see God's punishment on the unjust, but rather feel compassion.* After all, as the saying goes, "There, save for the grace of God, go I." To the point, Jesus tells us, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

3. *The time will come when God's judgment can't be withheld any longer.* So, we should be very thankful for the time we have to prepare for God's Kingdom and remain faithful, doing our part in God's Work.

4. *We can help carry out the "work of Jonah" at this present time.* Only God knows when to intervene and punish evildoers, while rewarding His obedient followers.

Indeed, Jonah was supposed to give the Ninevites a chance to repent, which was fulfilling God's work in that region, but he failed to have compassion on them. Today, the Church is doing a "work of Jonah" but on a worldwide scale. Presently, the world is headed the wrong way, just as ancient Nineveh was. Man's wickedness is again rising to heaven.

Let us heed, then, the prophesies of what's coming. Let's keep doing a work like Jonah did—and let's remain faithful! Remember, as Jonah learned, God's timing is always perfect. **UN**

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

On Aug. 29, Jeff Lockhart was ordained into the ministry. He serves as an assistant pastor in the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, congregation with his wife, Alisa. On Sept. 5, Dan Baker was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Linda, serve the Mansfield, Ohio, congregation.

Chris Rowland



Mario Seiglie pastors the Garden Grove, California congregation and serves the Spanish-speaking brethren in South America. He also writes for Beyond Today magazine and serves on the Council of Elders. He can be reached at mario_seiglie@ucg.org.

Family Study Guides Now Available

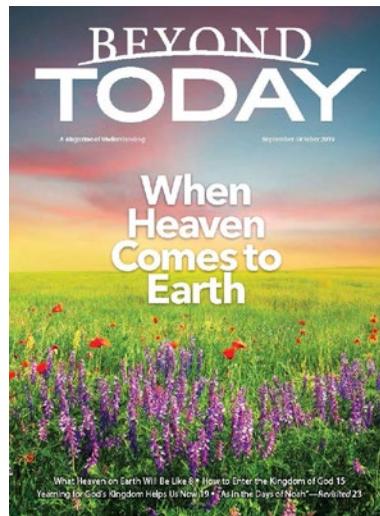
The 2020-21 youth instruction curriculum will delve into a study of the essential questions in life, using the Making God Real series, featured in the image above. Each month a guide will cover God's doctrines and the fundamental beliefs of United Church of God. These Family Study Guides are created to help parents review and better understand the basics of God's doctrines so they then

Download the lesson from the Family Study Guides webpage: ucg.org/members/family-study-guides

can initiate family discussions on understanding these vital truths. We encourage families to use the portions of the guides that are the most helpful and meaningful to your own family.

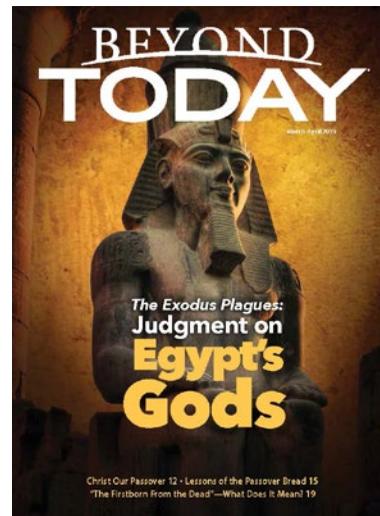
The first Making God Real family study guide is ready for your studies. In this family guide, we address the first essential question of life: *Does God exist, and where is He?* The guide will help your family explain how we know God exists and always has. What does it mean that God is everywhere? While we seek to understand God from the things that He has created, all comparisons are insufficient to entirely understand how great He is (Isaiah 46:5).

Randy and Kay Schreiber

You Can Help Preach the Gospel!**Beyond Today Magazine Back Issues Available for Member Distribution**

An opportunity is available for U.S. members of the United Church of God to help preach the gospel in their communities.

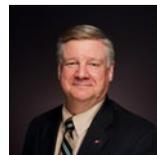
Back issues of *Beyond Today* magazine are available for brethren to distribute to interested friends, relatives, co-workers and neighbors, and/or to drop



off at waiting rooms in hospitals, doctor's offices, auto repair shops, etc. The available mag-

Contact John LaBissoniere:
john_labissoniere@ucg.org
(423) 562-9400

azines include *Beyond Today* and *Buenas Noticias* (Spanish language version of *Beyond Today*) copies. Be sure to ask permission before leaving magazines. If you would like a supply of magazines (minimum 25 copies, maximum 200), please contact John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org or (423) 562-9400. Please inform him of the magazine languages and quantity you would like, and provide your street address and phone number for UPS or FedEx delivery. **UN**



Peter Eddington serves as the Operations Manager for Media and Communications Services of United Church of God. He can be reached at peter_eddington@ucg.org.

Água Viva School Construction in Angola

By Jorge de Campos

OCT. 21, 2020 UPDATE: The Igreja de Deus Mundial in Angola, officially collaborating with United Church of God, an *International Association* in preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God in Angola, provides a community service of educating local children that are unable to attend government-sponsored schools. They have a number of small schools around some of their local congregations, which is part of a duly registered education program with the Angolan Department of Education. This educational program is officially registered under the name of Twamamico, which means "Go Forward" in the local dialect.

In the capital city of Luanda they have three Twamamico schools and one of them, in the Boa Esperança (Good Hope) congregation, is called the Água Viva (Living Waters) school. This school currently serves 743 students, of which 43 students are church members' children.

The Água Viva school needs to provide education to higher grades so that the children don't go back to the streets. As such, the school is going through an expansion project to double its



Construction has already begun on the expansion of the Água Viva School, which supports education in the community and provides jobs to teachers in the area.

capacity from seven classrooms to 14 classrooms by adding a second floor and an office area.

LifeNets and the ABC class of 2020 began fundraising to sponsor this project with a target amount of \$30,000. We are very happy to inform you that this target has been achieved. Thank you all for your generous contributions. The school construction has been initiated and the funds are being transferred to Angola as they are needed, in order to avoid the risk of losing their value due to the local currency's ongoing devaluation. This way we are able to stick to the budget, as local building costs are going up. The brethren in Angola have also already purchased the raw build-

ing materials to protect the investment against rapid inflation, which is affecting Angola due to the country's poor economic performance during the current COVID-19 crisis.

The local Angolan church council chairman, Paulino João Foi, stated the following in a letter to UCG dated Oct. 16, addressed to all who have so kindly supported this project, whether UCG members, LifeNets donors, ministers or UCG's Council of Elders:

"In the name of our eternal Father and Jesus Christ our Savior, we wish you peace and grace from our Savior Jesus Christ. In regards with the development of the work in Angola, the Church



is grateful for the commitment that has been made by our brothers in Christ, especially by UCG's Council of Elders and the brethren around the world.

"The gospel message is being preached by means of the *Boa Nova* [Portuguese edition of *Beyond Today*] and the kind financial support to our social projects, particularly in relation to the Twamamico school Água Viva. Its restructuring work al-

ready started on the 30th of last month [September].

"In conclusion, we are beseeching our eternal Father to continue to add to the blessings of the members of United Church of God, namely, the Council of Elders and in general, all the brethren around the world, [including all LifeNets generous donors], so that His will may be done." Signed by Paulino João Foi, Chairman. **UN**

GN

The Good News

Praise in Times of Trouble

When should we praise God? Is praise reserved for times of joy, or should we praise God in difficulties?

By Katherine Rowland

What do you think of when you hear the word “praise?” You might think of an expression of your approval of someone, or admiration of them. It can be telling someone how grateful we are for them or mentioning that person positively in a conversation with someone else. Often, we think of praise as being a reward for something done well. A key to good relationships is the willingness to praise more than we criticize. As Christians, we read many biblical commands to praise God. But when should we praise God? Is praise reserved for times of joy, or should we praise God when we are experiencing difficulties?

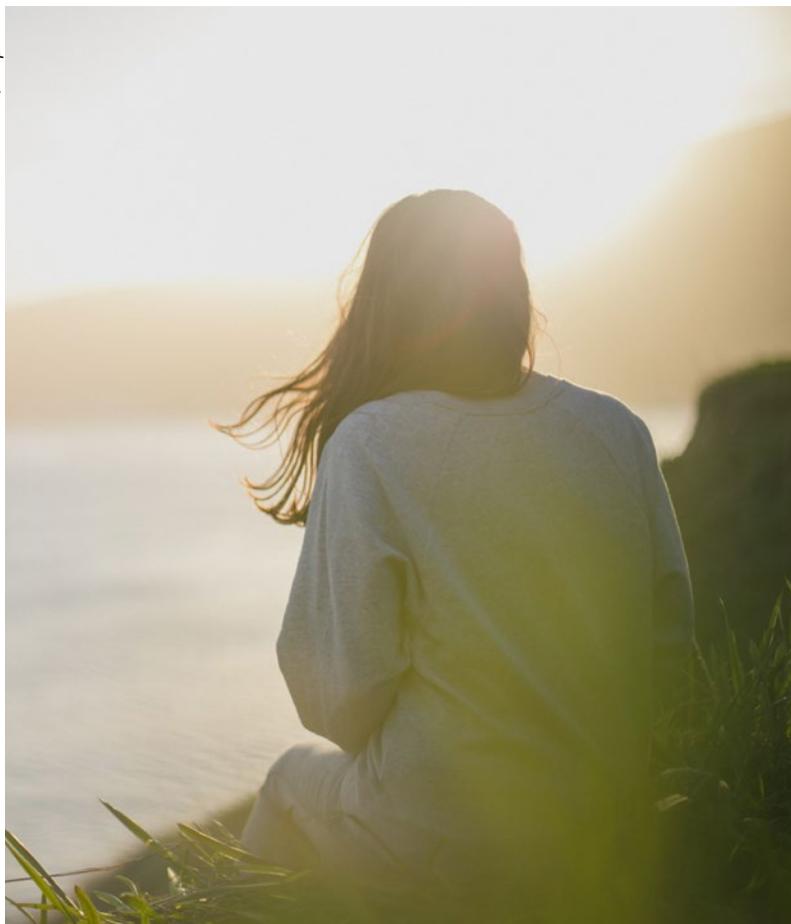
Because of how we are used to thinking of praise on an everyday level, it can be easy to think of it as being focused on someone’s interactions with us: someone does something that impacts us favorably, so we respond with praise. It is certainly not wrong to praise others! Praise and appreciation are simple when someone does something noteworthy, or when they are kind to us.

Likewise, we often find it easy to praise God when things are going well for us. When we pray and He answers in the way we had hoped He would, it can even be hard to keep ourselves from praising! We thank Him in our own prayers and songs of worship, and we are often motivated to tell others about how happy and thankful we are. There is even a common hashtag on social media sites for posts like this: #blessed. And praising God for good things is not wrong! We should definitely praise God in our times of joy and wellbeing.

But what about when things are not going so well? We didn’t get the job, we weren’t healed from the disease, we suffered loss instead of gain. Or maybe we are just in the middle of a situation where we cannot see how things will ever get any better: there just doesn’t seem to be a way out. Praise may be the last thing on our minds as we are crying out for help.

The Bible has a lot to say about praising God. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to “continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God . . . giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). And of course, when we think about biblical praise we think immediately of the Psalms. David and the other psalmists wrote words that are still used to praise God today, in hymns and songs of worship. Like the writer of Hebrews, David wrote that he would “bless the LORD at all times” (Psalm 34:1), and in Psalm 30 he instructs, “Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name” (Psalm 30:4).

Artem Kovalev/Unsplash



As we praise Him and refresh our memories of His goodness, we remind ourselves that we can trust Him for mercy and goodness.

One of David’s psalms shows us that we don’t have to wait to praise God until we are on the other side of trouble. The first verse of Psalm 57 reads, “Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.” David wrote these words when he fled from Saul and hid in a cave. Now, David knew that God had promised that he would be king over Israel; but at this moment, Saul was still king and he was trying to kill David. David didn’t know how God would bring about His promises; with his life in peril, David cried out to God for mercy and protection.

But a little later in the same psalm, David writes, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise . . . I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations” (Psalm 57:7, Psalm 57:9). Even while hiding from a very near danger, David proclaims praise to God.

How can we, like David, praise God even in the middle of “calamities?”

Remember to praise God for who He is, not for performing a specific action.

In Psalm 57:10, David writes that he will praise God because His “mercy reaches unto the heavens” and His “truth unto the clouds.” David praises God for the qualities that he knows—and that we know—God embodies. In another psalm, David records many of these qualities. He writes that the Lord forgives iniquities, heals diseases, redeems our lives, executes righteousness and justice, is merciful, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy—and so much more (Psalm 103:3-8)! Because of who He is, God has given His own begotten Son on our behalf; has given us the blessing of calling us His children, has offered us salvation, and gives us His Holy Spirit. These things are more than enough to cause us to praise His name.

Remember how God has delivered you in the past.

When David heard Goliath insulting the Lord and His people, he told Saul that he wanted to go to battle against Goliath. When Saul hesitated, seeing his youth, David explained that he had already seen God’s deliverance many times while shepherding his flock. He concluded, “The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). In Psalm 34, as he praised God for His deliverance, David wrote, “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). Remembering that God has delivered us—and others—before can help us to praise Him as we wait for His deliverance once again. As we praise Him and refresh our memories of His goodness, we remind ourselves that we can trust Him for mercy and goodness.

Remember to praise Him for what you know He will do.

In Psalm 27, David states that the Lord is his strength, and asks of whom, then, he should be afraid (Psalm 27:1). Near the end of the psalm, though, David confesses that he “would have lost heart,” had he not believed that he “would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). We might not see the way forward out of our trouble, but we are assured that any current trouble we might be in is a small thing compared to the great things ahead for God’s children (Romans 8:18). As John writes, “. . . this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

Praising God when you’re hurting may not feel the same as when you praise, full of joy. But in all things, we can praise our Lord, knowing that He is a loving Father who has promised to care for us and deliver us. Like David, we can express to God both our hurt and our thankfulness that He is our Father, that He is listening, and that He will deliver us. GN

Still Bearing Fruit in Old Age

Seniors have much to give to their families, communities and the Church. How can they use their lifetime of experience to bear fruit in old age?

By David Mills

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree . . . Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. *They shall still bear fruit in old age*” (Psalm 92:12-14, emphasis added throughout). This scripture shows seniors being active, productive and bearing fruit in the latter years of their lives.

How can seniors share their experiences and *bear fruit* in old age? Seniors have a lifetime full of stories and lessons, successes and failures, joy and sadness, health and sickness, laughter and tears. They possess a wealth of knowledge and experience to serve their families, communities and the Church.

A righteous example

No doubt, the most important way seniors can *bear fruit* is by their righteous example. The book of Proverbs states, “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31). By their godly example, seniors can have a powerful influence on younger generations.

Titus wrote about the example senior men should set: “that the *older* men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience” (Titus 2:1-2). As senior men exemplify these righteous qualities of Christian character, they provide much-needed stability and maturity in their families and in the Church. Senior men should be ready to advise younger men if they come with questions about the spiritual aspects mentioned in this passage as well as questions about family, jobs and finances.

Titus also wrote about the example of senior women: “The *older* women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:3-5). Through their righteous example and teaching, senior women provide great strength to their families and the Church. Senior women should be ready to advise younger women if they come with questions about the spiritual aspects mentioned in this passage, as well as questions about family, character and responsibilities.

Bearing fruit in the family, Church and community

In their families, seniors should look for opportunities to fulfill the biblical instruction to teach their children and grandchildren (Deuteronomy 4:9). Through their examples and teachings, seniors can pass on God’s way of life to the younger generations, “showing



As seniors go on toward perfection, they have the opportunity to set a righteous example as they serve and give in their families, communities and the Church.

the generation to come the praises of the LORD . . . and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4). There will also be opportunities to pass on family history, personal stories and lessons of life. Using wisdom and discretion, seniors can *bear fruit* as they share their experiences and advice on life with their children and grandchildren.

In the Church, senior men and women can *bear fruit* as they help with various aspects of services and activities, visiting the sick or homebound, making phone calls, writing cards and e-mails, etc. If some seniors are no longer able to do the physical tasks, they can still serve as mentors for those doing them by sharing their personal experiences when doing those tasks. Even in more advanced years of life, seniors can still *bear fruit* by following the example of Anna, a widow of *great age* who “served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:36-38).

In their local communities, some seniors also discover ways to *bear fruit* by doing volunteer work for various community organizations such as hospice, hospitals, senior centers, children’s activities, etc. It is rewarding to serve and give back where you can.

Bearing the most important fruit

The most important fruit seniors should bear is their *personal spiritual growth*, as they “go on to *perfection*” (Hebrews 6:1). The Greek word for “perfection” (*teleiotes*) means maturity, completion or the realization of a goal. Our goal is glorious Sonship in God’s eternal family (Romans 8:21).

The senior years are a time for deeper meditation and reflection about the meaning and purpose of this physical life. As seniors see the sand in their hourglass running lower, they realize more deeply that physical life is limited, and that their final years should be devoted to completion of “the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

Just as fruit ripens and matures just before the harvest, so God’s masterpiece should come to spiritual maturity in these later years of human life. All the qualities of God’s divine nature should come together—love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, kindness, patience, gentleness, self-control, holiness and righteousness.

As seniors go on toward perfection, they have the opportunity to set a righteous example as they serve and give in their families, communities and the Church. By *still bearing fruit* in their old age, they can have a good life that is full of meaning and purpose. And as they approach the finish line of their race, they can say with the apostle Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). **GN**

Apologetics in the Workplace

It is important that we know how to give a defense for our way of life, doctrinal beliefs and the existence of God in respectful and appropriate conversations.

By Amanda Miller

Having a conversation about religion in our secular society and in our places of work can be an intimidating task. For many Christians, the realities that they face on social media and in relationships with others—even at work—point to a society that has become less tolerant and accepting of the Christian faith because a Christian’s beliefs, lifestyle and values contradict the prominent voices of our society.

As ambassadors for Christ and witnesses of the coming Kingdom of God to the world, it is easy to become defensive when we hear a claim that simply isn’t true or an offhand remark mocking God or faith. However, when done correctly, apologetics can be an incredible tool to gain respect from both skeptics and non-skeptics. It may even help them reconsider their own views. Every work environment is different, but having respectful and appropriate conversations about our faith with coworkers is an important way that we can live out our faith.

Apologetics

Giving a well-reasoned and graceful defense—an answer that is both coherent and relevant to the listener—is the foundation of Christian apologetics. As Solomon said in the book of Proverbs, “To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!” (Proverbs 15:23, English Standard Version). Though the way we live can be our greatest testament and source of credibility, it should also spark conversations with those around us about our faith. It is important we know how to give a defense not just of our way of life and doctrinal beliefs, but also for God’s existence and the credibility of the Bible.

When disagreeable topics come up, it’s especially important that we understand the depth of the other person’s statements and the premises for their personal beliefs before we make a defense. If we ask a question even as simple as, “What do you mean when you say . . . ?” we can better understand what the true barriers are towards God, Christians and their faith. For some there are intellectual barriers, for others existential or personal dilemmas with God and so forth. Whatever it may be, that place is where we need to start. We shouldn’t begin by just saying what we presume they need to hear.

Let’s illustrate

First, let’s start off with an example of ineffectiveness. Say, in a conversation, someone says he or she doesn’t think the Bible was actually inspired by God. If we respond, “Well, the Bible says, ‘all Scripture is inspired by God’ in 2 Timothy 3:16,” this defense is going to fall on deaf ears. Though that Scripture is true, this

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person is saying he or she is not sure that the Bible is a credible source. By quoting Scripture stating that God inspired the Bible, we are trying to convince this person to trust a source by citing that source. This answer is ineffective because it causes circular reasoning in their mind. Alternatively, rather than answering the person with a laundry list of all the evidence from other sources validating the scriptures' authenticity, or touting that this person just needs to have faith—we need to start by asking what makes them lean towards skepticism of the scriptures and help them tackle that stronghold first.

Perhaps when this person elaborates, you discover that he or she believes all religious texts are pretty much the same, and since they all claim to be true it's impossible to know which one is the real deal. That is a great place to start, because this person is correct in believing that all the texts cannot be equally true—the content and claims about God, morals and humanity are vastly different! As the late and renowned Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias said, various religions' beliefs and texts are not “superficially different and fundamentally the same,” but rather “fundamentally different and superficially the same.” They deserve to be cross-examined and respected for their differences.

What's at the heart

I once had a conversation with a coworker about a personal dilemma she had in believing in God's existence because of the suffering that we experience in life. This conversation began when someone in the break room shared an unfortunate event that happened to someone. Out of left field, my coworker vehemently said, “and that's why I don't believe in God, because if God were real or if He cared, He wouldn't let that happen to them.”

This topic was obviously relevant to her experiences and had to be addressed tactfully. Having known her for about a year, I felt it was important that she was heard and given an opportunity to hear an explanation for the turmoil and hurt she had experienced in life. As conversation continued, it was clear that we weren't discussing God's existence. What was up for debate was whether or not He actually cared and deserved to be believed in.

I empathized with her feelings of despair and told her about a child I knew who died very young, and how I still mourn that loss of life—how I still choke up just thinking of it today. Though I do not know why this child had to suffer—only an omniscient God could know—I still believe that it's possible for God to

be loving in a world where evil exists.

I explained that if God had created a world in which evil could not exist, He would have created a world where humans never had a choice—and therefore they could not choose to love. Or, if God truly did not care, He could have created nothing at all. Nonetheless, because of His sacrifice, and the way of life and promises He has made, I will hold on to hope that He knows how to restore this world and resolve all of the evil, injustices and suffering that we experience. Our conversation ended respectfully, with a mutual understanding of our differences.

The examples before us

When we look at examples of apologetics in the Bible, we see writers who each understood their audiences' cultural roots and addressed the barriers in their ideologies. For example, when writing his gospel account, Matthew used genealogy to defend the messiahship of Jesus Christ to the Jews. Mark did not include an introduction to his gospel account in order to appeal to a gentile audience. Luke's writings gave an historical and orderly account of Jesus, which he validated with other eyewitness accounts as the Greeks did. John wrote his gospel account and letters from a theological perspective to address the testimony of Jesus and the gnostic philosophies circulating through his Palestinian-Jewish audience. Paul preached to citizens of Athens at the Areopagus of their “Unknown God” as the foundation of his witness testimony of Jesus Christ (Acts 17). And Jesus showed Thomas the scars on His hands from the crucifixion when Thomas could not believe based on the reports of others alone (John 20:24-29).

No matter what perspective the audience came from, these people preached the gospel by reaching their audience where they were. Though we share Judeo-Christian roots here in the United States, our culture is inundated with secular thought. So, in our spiritual conversations at work, remember to ask questions and search out the answers to people's barriers—whether religious, post-modern, humanistic or steeped in scientism. It's important that we know how to have meaningful conversations, show respect to the quest for truth and show love by reaching the heart of the individual.

The apostle Peter instructed us to, “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and [respect]” (1 Peter 3:15). **GN**

Q&A from UCG.org

Is there any point in sharing my faith with my non-Christian friends and family?

“If they'll be in the second or general resurrection anyway, is there any point in sharing my faith with my non-Christian friends and family?”

Absolutely!

We see within Scripture that God is the One who calls people to His truth (John 6:44). But we also see in Scripture that Christ Himself told His disciples—those who believed in and followed Him—to go out to the world and preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). So the fact that God draws people to Christ didn't absolve the disciples of their personal responsibility to preach the gospel.

God desires that no man should perish and that all should come to repentance and knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9), and there is an incredible amount of joy in heaven over every sinner that repents (Luke 15:7). Those individuals who overcome their sins in this life will

inherit the Kingdom of God (Revelation 21:7). By extension, as followers of Jesus Christ, we have a similar responsibility today. What if we are the tool that God uses to draw another sheep into His fold? We don't know whether He is working with someone or not, and it's impossible to know how our example—or perhaps our words—might positively affect someone that God is working with. What if it leads another person to repent and turn to God?

The gospel that Jesus preached was the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Those who believe it, accept it and overcome in this life will have an opportunity to be a part of the first resurrection—a resurrection which is referred to in Hebrews 11 as a “better resurrection” (Revelation 20 discusses the resurrections in more detail).

So there is certainly a point in sharing our faith with others, but the method by which we share our faith is equally—if not *more*—important. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus suggests we are to be as a light on a hill—a soft and welcoming light that people can see and navigate towards. Have you ever accidentally shone a powerful flashlight into your eyes? Was it pleasant and inviting? If our interaction with others is “shining our light” in this way, effectively blinding them—there's a good chance that it won't be welcome or appreciated.

Instead of blinding others, Peter tells us to live good honorable lives among those who are not believers, that they might see our conduct and glorify God in the day of His coming, letting our light shine in an appropriate way (1 Peter 2:12). Another instruction is to be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within you (1 Peter 3:15). **GN**

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We don't know whether God is working with someone or not, and it's impossible to know how our example or words might positively affect someone.

“I Believe in Doing Religion, Not Talking It”

So said Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing and a woman who dedicated her life to serving others. What can you and I learn from her example?

By John LaBissoniere

Today we often take for granted outstanding hospital facilities and expert medical personnel. But if we traveled back in time to England and many other countries in the early 1800s we would have found a dramatically different situation: “In that era English hospitals were places of degradation and filth. The malodorous ‘hospital smell’ was literally nauseating to many and nurses usually drank heavily to dull their senses” (Mary Lewis Coakley, *The Faith Behind the Famous: Florence Nightingale*, ChristianityToday.com, Jan. 1, 1990). Hospitals were crowded with poor people who could not afford private physicians. Nurses were uneducated and untrained. Nonetheless those circumstances were about to undergo a significant transformation due to the work, service and dedication of one woman.

Born in 1820 to a wealthy English family, Florence Nightingale was expected to grow up and then enter the elite social circles of her day. By age 17 a suitor offered her a marriage proposal which she graciously declined. In doing so she simply felt God was calling her to a different life—one dedicated entirely to service as a nurse. In discussing this aspiration with her parents, they were soundly unsupportive. They thought a young lady of her social stature should not enter a profession, especially one viewed in that day as menial labor.

Although Florence loved her parents, she felt strongly about pursuing what she believed was her divine calling. In 1850 her father reluctantly allowed her to train as a nurse at the Institute of Protestant Deaconesses’ in Kaiserwerth, Germany. Soon afterwards she obtained a nursing position at a hospital in London. Her efforts so impressed her employer that within a year she was promoted to superintendent. Florence worked diligently to improve nursing care while instituting sanitary procedures so as to diminish the spread of disease.

Responding to a health crisis during the Crimean war

Shortly thereafter a major event occurred that would dramatically influence Florence’s life and work. War erupted between the Ottoman-Turkish and Russian empires in October 1853. The Britain Empire entered the war in March 1854 on behalf of the Turks and sent thousands of troops to the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea. Within months nearly 8,000 British soldiers had been admitted to military hospitals in the Ottoman capital of Constantinople.

News reports began reaching the British public about appallingly deficient medical care of wounded soldiers. The Secretary of War asked Florence to lead a group of nurses to the area to help rectify the situation. Florence and 38 female nurses arrived there to discover wounded and ill soldiers languishing in hor-

rifically unsanitary, inhumane and overcrowded conditions. Many men were unwashed and lying in filthy uniforms. Florence also found that shockingly, five of every six patients were dying from infectious diseases such as typhus and cholera.

She immediately had the hospital wards scrubbed from top to bottom. She also established standards for patient care including bathing, clean dressings, bed clothes and adequate food. Due to her efforts and those of her dedicated staff, the patient mortality rate fell significantly.

At war’s end in March 1856, Florence returned to Britain a national heroine. To encourage the cause of nursing improvement, she founded the “Nightingale Training School for Nurses” at St. Thomas Hospital in London with money donated by grateful British soldiers and private citizens. To further advance her views on nursing and hospital reform she published two books in 1859, which were translated into other languages. Subsequently, leaders in several nations contacted her requesting advice on upgrading hospital, nursing and sanitation issues.

Through her resolve and dedication, Florence was instrumental in profoundly improving hospital conditions. She also transformed the nursing profession so that it became an honorable and sought-after vocation. Today she is widely celebrated as the founder of modern nursing.

Following the example of Jesus Christ

Florence Nightingale recognized the critical need for ordinary people to be given safe and empathetic medical aid. She readily and humbly filled that need in earnest service to others and in sincere devotion to her Creator. She said, “If I could give you information of my life it would be to show how a woman of very ordinary ability has been led by God in strange and unaccustomed paths to do in His service what He has done in her. And if I could tell you all, you would see how God has done all and I nothing. I have worked hard, very hard, that is all; and I have never refused God anything.” She once told an assembly of nurses, “Christ is the author of our profession” (Mary Elizabeth O’Brien, *A Sacred Covenant: The Spiritual Ministry of Nursing*, 2008, P. 4).

What can we learn from Florence’s story? It’s simply that as a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, she did her best to reflect His example of service and sacrifice. We should strive to do the same. Indeed, by Jesus’ words and actions as a human being, He proved to be the greatest servant the world has ever known. His approach to serving others is summarized by these words to His disciples: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus displayed selfless concern for people’s well-being and happiness (1 Peter 2:24). He left behind an indelible example of unconditional love for His disciples by demonstrating that genuine service contains no self-centered implications or motivations (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Applying ourselves to heartfelt, practical service

In this increasingly self-absorbed age we need to seek God in fervent prayer for His own love in order to truly serve people. His bounteous, divine love is in fact available to us through the power of His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). How can we actively apply ourselves to heartfelt, practical service? We can do so in ways that may seem inconsequential. It might be doing work around the house without being asked or volunteering to assist a neighbor with a project. It could be providing



How can we actively apply ourselves to heartfelt, practical service?

a meal to a widow or helping clean her house. It might be sending a card, an e-mail or making a phone call to someone who is ill or lonesome. Sometimes just “being there” can be comforting to a person who is lonely, depressed or has suffered a setback. Florence Nightingale wrote about serving in small ways, “Never lose an opportunity of *urging a practical beginning*, however small, for it is wonderful how often in such matters the mustard seed germinates and roots itself.”

Jesus described those who assisted people in need as if they were helping Him. “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40). The apostle James stated, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Florence Nightingale understood and lived by this principle. She said, “I believe in doing religion, not talking it.”

Serving (which can often be behind-the-scenes) should become a way of life. “But when you do a kindness to someone, do it secretly—don’t tell your left hand what your right hand is doing. And your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you” (Matthew 6:3-4, *The Living Bible*). The apostle Paul highlighted the example of a Church member named Epaphras who quietly served people through zealous prayer (Colossians 4:12). Praying for others is a vital spiritual benefit we can all render.

Being a fellow worker with God

Florence Nightingale was willing to give up a comfortable life to enter a profession which many in her day considered menial. She felt deeply that bringing care and comfort to ill and hurting people was her God-given calling. In reflecting on her life of service she said, “To be a fellow worker with God is the highest aspiration of which we can conceive man capable.”

Florence’s remarkable example is one which we can admire and seek to emulate. Yet even more importantly, we have the profound opportunity to imitate Jesus Christ who stands as the foremost model of one who wholeheartedly served. Let us therefore diligently seek the Eternal Father’s powerful help so His love flows through us in service to others. In doing so, we will follow His Son Jesus Christ’s perfect example. We can then also echo the words of Florence Nightingale who said, “I believe in doing religion, not talking it.” GN



John & Elsie Kangas

63rd Anniversary



Herman & Marian Schafer

61st Anniversary



Gabriella Elise Call

Sept. 6, 2020



Levi Landon White

Aug. 27, 2020



Betty Bost

Nov. 19, 1942-Sept. 13, 2020

Anniversaries

John and Elsie Kangas

On Oct. 26, 1957, John and Elsie were united in marriage. They have four wonderful children and eight grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren.

The Yuma congregation celebrated the Kangas' with a potluck and a walk down memory lane reflecting on their lives in the Church. We have had the privilege of enjoying their presence here with us during the winter months in order to escape the cold of Minnesota. They started their trek to Yuma more than 30 years ago.

John's interest in the work of the Church began as a teenager through literature sent out by Mr. Armstrong. It was the old mimeograph copy of the Church's literature at the time. He was attending his parent's church at the time and had questions, but the pastor told him to stop reading Mr. Armstrong's material because it would only confuse him. The information stopped coming to his home after the conversation with that pastor. However, after John and Elsie were married the information came again by way of the radio. John was baptized in 1967 and Elsie in 1965. He and Elsie have now been worshipping and serving God for many years.

Herman and Marian Schafer

The Yuma Congregation came together after Sabbath services to honor a couple for their 61 years of marriage. We have watched them and learned

love and commitment in the services of God from them for many years. Herman and Marian were married on Dec. 29, 1958. They met in May 1955. Together the Schafers produced four sons in their long marriage: Shane, born June 1960; Donald, born March 1962; Darren, born Jan 1964 and Elben, born in 1973. The Schafers are farmers by profession, and to this very day they still farm in Edmonton, Alberta.

Herman and Marian learned of the Church through the broadcasts when they were dating. After listening to the broadcast for a while, they decided they needed to be baptized, so they packed up the truck and their then-three boys, and headed to Pasadena, California. After arriving there, they were told, "you have a church in Edmonton and you should see the pastor there." So after a detour to Florida to visit Marian's family, on their way home they found Richard Pinelli waiting for them. They were both baptized in June 1966, and the rest is history. Elben, their fourth son, was born in 1973. He resides in Austin, Texas, with his wife Fran, and their three children.

The Schafers began their yearly six-month stay in Yuma, Arizona, in 1987. It has been a pleasure to meet them and grow together in love over these many years. Two of their sons have died due to vehicle and farming equipment accidents. They have nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren—the joy of their lives. In their words, "We look forward coming to Yuma each year. First, wonderful people and second, the weather!"

Births

Gabriella Elise Call

Jacob and Sophia Call of Portsmouth, Ohio, are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter, Gabriella Elise Call. Gabriella was born at 12:41 p.m. on Sept. 6, 2020. She weighed 6 lbs. 3 oz. and measured 20 in. long. Grandparents Kevin and Debbie Call of Portsmouth, Ohio, and Vinny and Becky Del Signore of Auburn, New Hampshire, are overjoyed at their first grandbaby. Parents and relatives are thankful for a safe delivery and sweet, healthy little girl.

Levi Landon White

Reuben and Loralyn White of the Saratoga Springs, New York, congregation welcome their third addition, Levi Landon White. Levi made an exciting entrance in the early hours of Aug. 27, weighing 7 lbs., 8 oz. and measuring 19 in. long. Siblings Elizabeth and Malachi adore their new brother.

Obituaries

Betty Bost

Betty Bost of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation died on Sept. 13 at age 77. She was born on Nov. 19, 1942, baptized in 1982 and was a longtime, faithful member of God's Church. Her husband, Jim, preceded her in death in 2013.

Betty fervently served God and His people for many years as a church greeter; she also did set-up, take-down and choir,

and sent cards to the sick and shut-ins. She also loved serving on the handicapped crew at the Feast in Jekyll Island, Georgia, each year, as well as helping in the financial office with the offerings. But dearest to her heart was her part in spreading the gospel of the Kingdom by setting up and maintaining numerous newsstands for the *Good News* (now *Beyond Today*) magazine. She set a national record in UCG over several years for the number of magazines distributed this way!

Since 2017, she resided at an assisted living facility and could not be nearly as active, but she will long be remembered for her fine example of faith, perseverance and positivity. She was an encouragement and inspiration to the numerous brethren who met her, and we look forward to seeing her again when Jesus Christ returns!

Ara Atlean Broach

It is impossible to summarize someone's life and do it justice. The impact that one person's life has on other lives is immeasurable. That is why it is so important when that one person chooses to give their life to God our Father and to His pursuits. Ara Atlean (Atlean to some and Miz Broach to others) gave her life to God. When she was called into the Church, she went "all in" and passed down her steely faith in God to all who knew and loved her. When she believed in something, she fiercely held onto it and didn't let the enemy of our calling dissuade her.

She was born on April 24, 1929, the second child of Robert Hollon Witherspoon and



Ara Atlean Broach

April 24, 1929-Feb. 9, 2020

Dona Mae Witherspoon in Depression era Tennessee. Life was hard on the farm and everyone worked to keep it going. Being the eldest girl, Atlean was cooking before she was 10 years old and taking care of her many younger brothers and sisters. In later years she worked every kind of job she could to support her own children: cooking, cleaning houses and taking in boarders among other things.

You didn't have to be related to Atlean see her example of living God's way. Part of Atlean's name means "serves" and "God is gracious." She exemplified serving God and others to everyone she met. She always wanted to be at church at least an hour and a half early and always wanted to know how she could help. She cooked excellent food for potlucks, babysat or hosted Church members at the "Broach Hotel"

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Lynn Coleman

Feb. 24, 1942-June 19, 2020



James Ellis

July 6, 1942-July 12, 2020



Kenneth Eugene Garman

Sept 15, 1934-Sept. 4, 2020



Carol A. Garvin

Nov. 26, 1939-Sept. 13, 2020

Ara Atlean Broach, cont.

if they were in need, asked if you needed money and literally gave her very last dollar in her billfold—the list goes on. She greeted everyone she met as if she had known them her whole life. After just meeting someone, she often promised them a quilt, and she always followed through! Her example of serving and giving left an indelible mark on her children and grandchildren, one that they strive to pass on to others.

One of her many gifts was sewing, learned as a child out of necessity to help the family. She used this gift to serve others. One project she had was to make clothes for all of the girls for Holy Day services. She often teased friends with a twinkle in her eye, making them feel loved and important. She managed to have a different relationship with everyone she knew.

In her elderly years, it gave her such joy to save up single dollar bills all year, then give them to little children at the Feast so they could feel important and special. Many kids fondly remember the kind lady who gave them their very own dollars at the Feast.

Another priceless gift she gave to others was Friday night supper. Every single Friday night, for over 50 years, no matter what was going on and who was there, Atlean would have supper at her home to bring in the Sabbath. All were welcome. Somehow, even when money was tight, there was always more than enough of whatever she had prepared. Many hours were spent fellowshiping with brethren and family.

A founding member of the

Cape Girardeau, Missouri, congregation in the 60s, Atlean was baptized in 1964. She was one of the thousands of people to bring their families to Jekyll Island, Georgia, for the Feast in 1966 under the giant tent.

Atlean rarely missed a service at the Senior Center or Quade Hall in Cape Girardeau. She continued to attend up until a couple of weeks before she went to sleep. She hated to miss services. She loved the Feast and our great and glorious God, and did her best every day to honor Him with her life. God blessed her health and allowed her to be mostly mobile up until the last two years of her life. Her example of faith has inspired her family members to also fight the good fight and win.

She is survived by her children: Alice Lyell (Marshall), Debbie Bates (Dan) of the Bakersfield, California, congregation, Carolyn Schumaker (Allen), Joe Broach (both of the Cape Girardeau congregation), Bailly (Tim Moore), Mae Ruth Broach and Darryl Broach. She is also survived by 26 grandchildren, 28 great grandchildren, eight great-great-grandchildren, and countless nieces and nephews.

Atlean went to sleep peacefully on Feb. 9. God showered us with many blessings, and one of the most precious was that we were able to have all of the family and friends who could come to the funeral service two weeks before the nation was put under quarantine for COVID-19. This was a blessing from our great God for us all to be able to grieve in person together. The family welcomes anyone who remembers Atlean to contact

them to reminisce.

May God our Father speed the day that He will allow His Son to return and reign so that we may all see the twinkle in her lovely blue eyes again and feel her arms around us in a hug. She has won her race, and now we must all win ours.

Lynn Coleman

Lynn Coleman was born Feb. 24, 1942. She died at home with her family at her side on June 19, 2020. Lynn is survived by her husband of 62 ½ years, Paul Coleman, three children, Carrie (Bill) Heagstedt, Jeff (Deborah) Coleman and Kris (Brent) Feiock, six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Lynn and Paul came into the Church in December of 1968 and were both baptized in January 1969. Lynn lived to see four generations of her family in the Church and attended 52 Feasts of Tabernacles.

She was known for the many unique afghans she crocheted—she was always making something for someone. For many years, she read the Bible through one to two times a year, and she would always sing one of the hymns before bed each night. Lynn was a strong pillar to her family and she is sadly missed!

James Ellis

James Ellis of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation died on July 12. He had been battling cancer for quite some time and had been in considerable pain for months. James was a veteran of the U.S. Navy and was laid to rest at the National Cemetery in Salisbury, North Carolina.

James was a man of not only

tremendous faith, but tremendous singing talent. He had a beautiful, rich, deep voice that could carry around a room and which was truly a pleasure to hear. Even while battling cancer, he often shared that he knew that God alone was in charge and that no matter what happened to him here and now, God knew best and would someday give him a new body.

One of the last things James said before his passing was, “No matter what happens, it’ll be okay—it’s in God’s hands.” James now peacefully awaits the resurrection, having died a faithful member of the body of Christ.

Kenneth Eugene Garman

Kenneth Eugene Garman died peacefully the evening of Sept. 4, less than two weeks before what would have been his 86th birthday. He was a faithful follower and servant since his baptism in November 1952.

Ken was a beekeeper for nearly 60 years, starting as a small hobbyist as a young man while he worked for the local newspaper. He later made a full time living solely off beekeeping. Ken was Kentucky’s largest beekeeper for many years, doing all the work by himself until late in his career. He was a good friend of Walter Kelley and Earl King, both of Kelley’s Beekeeping.

Ken was one of the founding forefathers of KY Beekeeping. In the early years he was very active in the KY State Beekeepers Association, even serving as president for a short time. He also was known to work the booth and furnished honey at the State Fair for years.

Ken was a kind man, and very generous with his time

as he mentored many new “beeks.” He was a friend to bees, always saying “every bee matters” as he gently replaced a frame back into a hive. In his death, we lost a true friend as well as a world of knowledge regarding beekeeping, honey flow and bee plants.

Ken was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth, who died in 2016. He is survived by his loving dog and numerous friends.

Carol A. Garvin

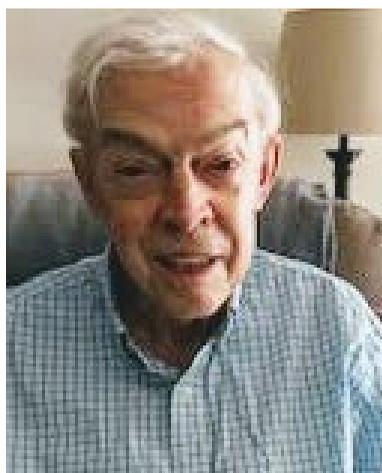
Carol A. (Lipps) (Loudin) Garvin, age 80, of Sherrods-ville, Ohio, died peacefully in her home on Sept. 13. She was born Nov. 26, 1939, in Bergoo, West Virginia, and was the daughter of the late Olen and Lula (Shaver) Lipps.

Carol was a 1957 graduate of Buckhannon-Upshur High School. She began working at Riedboard Brothers garment factory before establishing herself as a dressmaker in her own cottage industry. She married Oral E. Garvin on March 26, 1976, and moved to Ohio. As Oral approached retirement, Carol began to pursue her lifelong interest in genealogy. She researched both her parents’ families as well as her husband’s family. She compiled and published five complete-to-date books, which can be found in several libraries and historical societies.

She loved birding and includes over 600 different birds on her life’s list. Her other hobbies included vegetable gardening, growing flowers, needlework, spending time outdoors and photography. Her favorite hobby was travel—she and her husband visited all 50 U.S. states! She treasured visiting places she learned about in grade school classes. When she was in third grade, Carol was introduced to the Grand Teton mountains and Grand Coulee Dam and she said to herself, “I want to see that!” She accomplished that goal on her way to celebrate the Feast in Bend, Oregon, in 2008!

The year 2019 saw the completion of her book, “Symbols of the 50 States of the United States of America,” which includes a photo of and facts about each state bird, flower and tree.

Carol was a faithful 54-year member of the Church. She most recently attended



Gilbert A. Geiser

Sept. 23, 1932-Aug. 15, 2020

Carol A. Garvin, cont.

the Cambridge, Ohio, congregation along with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Carol was a woman of strong faith and faced life's challenges with courage, grace and dignity.

Carol was preceded in death in 2018 by her husband, Oral E. Garvin. She is survived by her son Sid (Kellie) Loudin of Barnesville, Ohio, her daughter Sherry (Scott) Thouvenin of Canton, Ohio; grandchildren Brandon (Jessica) Loudin and Amanda (Patrick) Hession of Barnesville, Ohio, Natalie and Abigail Thouvenin of Canton, Ohio; great-grandchildren Peyton, Paizlie and Paxtyn Loudin; and Olen, Colin and Aidan Hession; step-son Timothy Garvin of Kentucky and his children and grandchildren; she is also survived by two brothers Rondel Lipps of Virginia, Ralph (Opal) Lipps of West Virginia, and her beloved sister Donna (Dick) Ervin of West Virginia.

Graveside services were conducted Sept. 18, 2020. She will be sadly missed by her family and friends more than words can say.

Gilbert A. Geiser

Gilbert A. Geiser, age 87, died peacefully in Los Angeles, California, on Aug. 15. He was a devoted and loving father, grandfather, widower, friend, provider, peacemaker, caregiver and patient teacher with a conscientious work ethic. Gil was a life-long resident of Ohio, residing in Dalton, Fredericksburg, Apple Creek, Cleveland and North Canton; wintering the last three years in West Hollywood, California. The third of ten children, he was born at home in Paint Town-



Elsie Marie Hooser

Sept. 17, 1939-Aug. 21, 2020

ship, Wayne County, Ohio, on Sept. 23, 1932, to Allen P. and Orpha (Gerber) Geiser.

He completed eight years of formal education from Apple Creek School, graduating in 1948. His career began on the family dairy operation with custom crop sharing, bulldozer construction and sawmilling. He served in 1W (alternative) service 1952-1953 as a nurse aid at University of Cleveland, and partnered with his eldest brother in milk can hauling, which prepared him for driving for All States Trucking (1952-1962) and briefly in 1963 for Powerfax Propane in Wooster, Ohio. His career as a tool and die maker began at Wooster Brush, Menegay Tool & Die in Canton (1964-1965), Supreme Mold & Die in North Canton (1965-1979), Protista Tool as owner and president (1979-1987) and Superb Industries in New Bedford (1998-2000). In 1987, he returned to the trucking industry driving for Don Grove in Greentown, then for Direct Transit in Canton, Harris Transportation in Monroe, NC, R&H in Burbank, Harold Miller in Uniontown and BOBAN Transport in Barberton.

On Sept. 13, 1958, he married Marilyn Ann Shank, daughter of Roy and Mable (Hilty) Shank, in their first home in Apple Creek, Ohio. He was an active member of Guardian Ministries, Church of God, a Worldwide Association, and United Church of God, noting previous membership with Worldwide Church of God, Radio Church of God and Kidron Mennonite Church. His passion was serving people with loving kindness through words and

actions, devoted to family and community. His married life to Marilyn for 59 years was enriched with children, education, industry and community service. Their family traveled throughout the U.S., Canada, Bahamas, England and Europe. One of Gilbert's favorite scriptures was Psalm 128:1-6.

His 1W and church experiences prepared him for The Adult Volunteer Concierge Program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where he volunteered every Thursday, greeting and assisting patients entering the hospital. He developed a friendship with co-volunteers, Howard and Mark, who arrived early for their shifts to cheerfully greet the staff. The three of them have been missed during this pandemic because the adult volunteer service was suspended for their safety.

He is survived by his six children: Kevin Geiser and Lorin Geiser, both of North Canton, Ohio; Greg (Tawnya) Geiser of Spokane, Washington; Karen Geiser of West Hollywood, California; Diane (Eric) Frantz of Jefferson, Ohio; Mark (Shawn) Geiser of Hickory, North Carolina; 12 grandchildren: Zachary Geiser of Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Morgan Frantz of Jefferson, Ohio; Zane (Sarah) Geiser of Sydney, Australia; Trevor Frantz of Jefferson, Ohio; Jake Geiser of Hickory, North Carolina; Stuart Frantz of Jefferson, Ohio; Makayla Frantz of Marina del Rey, California; Lydia Frantz of Jefferson, Ohio; Josh Becker of Spokane, Washington; Collin (Amanda) Becker of Wasilla, Alaska; Shelby Jefferson-Fink of Lancaster, California; Trevor Jefferson of Veradale, Washington; two great grandchildren: Zoey Fink and Maximux Fink; five siblings: Amos (Erma) Geiser of Kidron, Ohio; Esther (Lloyd) Lehman of Dalton, Ohio; Daniel Geiser of Apple Creek, Ohio; Doris (Dave) Miller of Wooster, Ohio; Ray (Carol) Geiser of Wooster, Ohio and sister-in-law, Delores Geiser of Overgaard, Arizona as well as 31 nieces and nephews and four siblings through marriage: Anna Mae (Lamar) Lantz of Mesa, Arizona, Donald (Terri) Shank of Cincinnati, Ohio; Jean (Ken) Witalis of

North Canton, Ohio; Deborah (Lloyd) Patterson of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Gilbert was predeceased by his wife, Marilyn; parents, Allen and Orpha (Gerber) Geiser; brothers: Nathan Geiser, Frank Geiser, Peter Geiser and Sylvester Geiser; sisters-in-law: Pru Geiser and Lynda Geiser, brother-in-law: Kenneth Shank of Sharon, South Carolina and granddaughter, Katelyn Frantz.

Elsie Marie Hooser

Elsie Marie Hanson, born Sept. 17, 1939, grew up in Detroit, Michigan, the oldest of four children. Both of her parents were Swedish and the family attended a Swedish Lutheran church. After Elsie's high school graduation, she worked for an insurance company for several years. In 1961, she learned about Radio Church of God and began attending Sabbath services. She was baptized on Dec. 27, 1962.

Elsie attended her first Feast of Tabernacles in 1962 at Big Sandy, Texas. That is where she met her husband, Don. He had begun attending Sabbath services only a few weeks prior and knew very little about the teachings of the Bible. When Elsie realized this, she eagerly began to teach him! So Elsie was Don's first Bible teacher. The two quickly began to fall in love. Major factors that inspired Don were Elsie's strong character, zeal, delightful personality and love for God's truth. She was also pretty!

While Don was a freshman at Ambassador College at Pasadena during 1963-1964, Elsie applied as well. The new Big Sandy campus began in 1964. Elsie was accepted to Ambassador College in Big Sandy and Don was transferred there. Elsie and Don always believed that God orchestrated placing them together on the same campus for two years. After Don graduated, Elsie and Don got married on Sunday, June 5, 1966. Their "honeymoon" consisted of driving to Ak-

ron, Ohio, for Don to work as a ministerial trainee. Don has been employed as a minister since then. Their daughter Amy was born in Akron.

Don and Elsie served two years in Akron and then six years in Cincinnati, where their son Randy was born. In 1972, Don was appointed to be the pastor of the new Cincinnati East congregation and the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation. After that, Don pastored churches in Nebraska (where their son Danny was born), Oklahoma, Texas and Washington. In December 2010, they moved to McKinney, Texas. In 2017 at the GCE conference, Elsie and Don were honored for their 50 years of service in the ministry.

In the spring of 2020, Elsie got lymphoma for the second time. She seemed to be quickly recovering with the chemotherapy, but in August, her health declined. She was in the hospital during her last week but, thankfully, without intense suffering. Don and her daughter Amy were with her when she died.

Elsie loved reading, especially about history. She was creative and artistic. She enjoyed sewing, decorating, flower arranging and cake decoration for church functions. Elsie made some of her own clothes and many of her children's clothes when they were young.

Elsie dearly loved her family, and during the last seven and a half years, one of her greatest joys was her granddaughter, Rylie.

Elsie and Don always felt greatly blessed to be so compatible. They agreed not only on spiritual matters, but on most other things including parenting, nutrition, politics, entertainment and love of God's creation. Elsie's husband Don wrote, "I feel immensely thankful for the 53½ years of our happy marriage and the countless blessings God gave us, including our three loving children." UN

Announcements: Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to UN@ucg.org. We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author's and photographer's names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you'd like photos returned.

Women's Enrichment Weekend Held in Eastern Zambia



Top left: Chosiwe Jere delivers a welcome speech. Top right: Chiwoko women clad in the special robes given to participants. Bottom: The women arrived on Thursday and prepared to begin the weekend's activities.

EASTERN ZAMBIA—On July 23-24, women gathered from several areas to attend the Women's Enrichment Weekend. However, participants spent the Sabbath together before dispersing on Sunday, July 26. The 25 participants came from Ngilile, Chiwoko and Chipata. Attendance was deliberately kept down in conformity with local COVID-19 restrictions. The women were welcomed on the first evening by organizer Chosiwe Shanzi Jere, who thanked the participants for their keenness to attend and encouraged them to learn and share their own experiences. She reminded the ladies to exhibit love and unity in whatever they said and did throughout the event and to continue doing so upon their return home.

Later that day, the pastor spoke on the women's importance as wives, mothers and caregivers with the unique ability to help transform men into husbands, houses into homes and children into godly people. To be discarded, he said, was the deeply ingrained belief among many African communities that women are inferior to men. He also explained the importance of women in the Church.

In addition to regular ses-

sions of learning, sharing, Bible study and early morning physical exercises, there were two special sessions. The first was a serious health talk on HIV and AIDS given by Ms. Ruth Jere, a widow who had contracted the disease from her husband.

After her husband's death, Ruth had lived for 19 years in a hostile environment of social stigma and rejection, which kills many sufferers. But because of her stamina, many international organizations had adopted her as their ambassador on matters of health, human rights and gender-based violence.

Ruth also taught the women about cervical cancer and encouraged participants to get regular testing to know their status on both HIV and cervical cancer.

Another interesting talk was on human rights and gender-based violence where women were often the victims. Mr. Banda, an officer from the Victim Support Unit of the Police Department, dwelled extensively on human rights relevant to women and discussed various forms of gender-based violence and how to deal with it. The women appreciated these lessons and took notes.

On the second day, Chosiwe distributed two-meter cloths

to the participants. This same type of cloth was acquired and distributed to women in other parts of the country during the Women's Enrichment Weekend happening at the same time near Isoka (included in the Sept.-Oct. 2020 issue of *United News*). Though not a church uniform, Chosiwe explained that wearing the cloth was a way to evangelize about the gospel and identify the women as members of the Church. Color was added to the congregation that met for the Sabbath the following day.

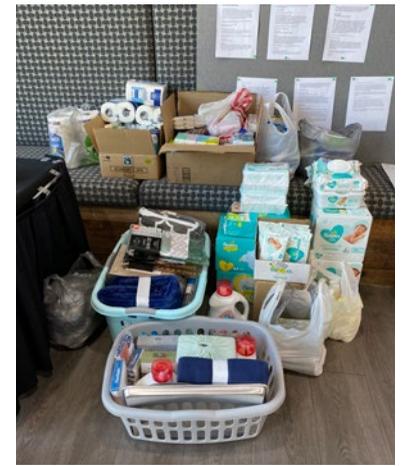
Before departure on Sunday, food packs were distributed to families from distant areas. Each food pack was comprised of soy relish, vegetable oil and salt.

In an environment where UCG has often been regarded as a religious oddity, this event gave the participants courage to boldly proclaim to other people in their own communities the truths that have been pushed aside and ignored by others.

The Women's Enrichment Weekend was a great success in Chipata and could never have taken place without the assistance from loving members of the Church and LifeNets. To these, thanks are extended.

Chosiwe Jere

Letting Our Lights Shine at the Feast



Donations collected for Christ's Home charity organization in Pennsylvania.

LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA—The Feast of Tabernacles is a powerful opportunity to let our light shine as God's people. How we interact with each other and the community at large can be a powerful testimony of God's Spirit and love working in us.

As a way to let that light shine a bit further we identified a local charity in the greater Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area that we collected donations for. This charity, Christ's Home, has been in continuous operation since 1903 and provides for the needs of vulnerable children and seniors. Christ's Home maintains a wish-list on Amazon, so we were able to quickly and easily share a list of needed items with our brethren.

We put out the call for donations on Tuesday during the Feast and the love and generosity of our brethren did not disap-

point. Needed items and monetary donations began streaming in the next day. By Friday we had collected 329 individually donated items and \$2,543 for the purchase of the remaining items on the organization's wish-list.

Megan Young, an employee of Christ's Home, responded with the following, "Let me first begin by saying a huge thank you to you and your entire group [for] your generosity in such a difficult season . . . Your donations are such a blessing to our children and staff! Thank you again!"

Being able to coordinate this outreach initiative has been a genuinely fantastic experience for me. I am amazed and humbled by the love and generosity shown by our brethren—they truly fulfilled our commission to "do good to all" (Galatians 6:10).

Lena VanAusdle

ABC Fundraiser Announcement: Magnetic Yearly Calendars Available!

The Ambassador Bible College class of 2021 is once again offering magnetic calendars as a fundraiser. This 11- by 8.5-inch glossy full-year planner sticks to refrigerator or similar surface. It shows the entire year, marking annual Holy Days, U.S. federal holidays, and the start and end of Daylight Saving Time. You may use dry erase markers on it as well. The cost is \$5 each, plus a small charge for postage. When a congregation places a single order, deliverable to one address, shipping is free. A sign-up sheet for congregations can be found on the members website.

The United Church of God supports the operation of ABC for the benefit of the Church at large and the individuals who are able to attend. However, it does not seem appropriate to pay for some of our student activities through tithes and donations provided for doing the Work of the Church. Your support will enable the students to participate in educational field trips as well as in a class trip this spring. That annual trip allows the ABC Chorale to serve a distant congregation, and the students to visit cultural and educational attractions beyond the scope of our normal schedule.

Please mail completed order forms and payment (payable to ABC Student Fund) to: Ambassador Bible College, 555 TechneCenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. You can also send the order in and send the payment later after delivery. Individual calendars can be mailed to a home address but add \$1 to the price for shipping (\$6 total). To order one, or if you have questions, please email ABCfundraiser@ucg.org. UN

Youth Camp Held in Mufulira, Zambia



MUFULIRA, ZAMBIA—We would like to thank our Creator in heaven for making it possible to hold such a successful and fruitful youth camp, especially in this trying time as the world is shaken with the dangerous pandemic caused by COVID-19. We would also like to thank our sponsors for the support they rendered to see that the 2020 UYC camp was successful. Camp was held Aug. 16-23, so as many students as possible could attend while on school break.

The overall theme of the camp was “Be Anchored to God.” We introduced new games in addition to the usual tag, soccer, volleyball and speed-away. We also had a variety of speakers for Christian living, and life skills classes included lessons on career planning, financial discipline, health and hygiene, arts and crafts, baking and tie dye. On Friday, we could not do our scheduled outing due to

COVID-19 safety measures, so a party with music and dancing was organized within the camp. The fun activity came to an end Friday evening to give the campers and staff time to prepare for the Sabbath. People came from all over Zambia as in previous years, and the venue was large enough for the required distancing. There was enough water and sleeping arrangements were ideal, and the camp’s central location in Zambia helped 68 people from all over Zambia to come learn and grow together.

This year’s camp gave us hope as leaders and organizers that indeed camp lessons are important to our campers. We have received messages of encouragement from parents, confirming changes and improvements in their children after camp. We know our mission is to train youths who can be future leaders.

Rodrick Epomba

ABC Selects Class Officers for Academic Year



Back row: Kyle Bacher, Jeremy Grinnell, Luke Barker, Josh Cook, Collin McCrady
Front row: Camryn Stetter, Amanda Schmidt, Faith Rains, Ashlee Jennings, Talia Callea, Malysa Messer, Elizabeth Tinkler

CINCINNATI, OHIO—Ambassador Bible College has appointed students to leadership positions for this school year. Luke Barker will be serving as class president, while Malysa Messer and Jeremy Grinnell will assist him as secretary and treasurer, respectively. Josh Cook, as class monitor, will ensure that the lecture hall is set up correctly for class and equipment is taken care of.

Collin McCrady, assisted by Ashlee Jennings, was appointed head of the social activities plan-

ning committee. Faith Rains was appointed to the service activities committee, in which she will seek out and set up service opportunities for the ABC students to give back to the community and those in need. The classroom message board will be coordinated by Amanda Schmidt and Elizabeth Tinkler will be in charge of sending out cards from the class to brethren. Kyle Bacher, as technical support lead, will ensure that classes are recorded when needed and that

all sound equipment is in proper working order. The *ABC Times* and yearbook will be edited and produced by Camryn Stetter and Talia Callea. Elizabeth Tinkler will also serve as music coordinator for this year’s ABC chorale, assisted by Ashlee Jennings and Collin McCrady.

The ABC faculty and staff look forward to working with the students as they serve in these leadership positions during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Ariana Del Signore

Cincinnati Brethren Distribute Farm-to-Family Food Boxes



More than 60 people volunteered to assist directing traffic, loading cars and restocking boxes.

CINCINNATI, OHIO—On Oct. 26, after receiving a shipment of “Farmers to Family Food Boxes,” Church members distributed 1,248 18-pound boxes of fresh food to members of the community. The retail value of the food was more than \$56,000.

This was made possible due to one section of the “CARES Act” stimulus package in which funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture supported farmers and distributors to disperse their produce during a time when many restaurants have closed or have greatly reduced their consumption.

This new Farmers-to-Families Food Box program assisted farmers, distributors and everyday Americans. Boxes were sent to nonprofits, churches and food pantries that serve American

families for distribution.

Pastor Steve Myers helped organize the event and mentioned: “It is a wonderful blessing to be able to serve our community through this program and help make a little bit of difference to those in need. It’s an inspiration to see how quickly God’s people came together to help make this happen.”

More than 60 individuals and families volunteered to assist directing traffic, loading cars and restocking boxes. Masked volunteers loaded the desired number of boxes into cars passing through so that the delivery was contactless and those receiving the food could remain in their car. Many took extra boxes for friends, relatives and neighbors.

At the home office focus meeting Monday morning before the

event, Peter Eddington drew the employees’ attention to Matthew 25:34-40 in which Jesus commended the righteous for giving Him food when He was hungry, drink when He was thirsty and so on. When they asked him, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed you . . . ?” He answered, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

The Cincinnati congregations took a step in that direction by distributing these food boxes. Due to the great turnout and the immediate and enthusiastic support from local brethren, we plan to make this type of effort a more regular occurrence in the future to support our local community.

Victor Kubik

A short video created by Peter Eddington can be found at:
<https://bit.ly/UCGFoodDrive>

- Nov. 1-7 | **All About Grace**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *What Does the Bible Teach About Grace?*
- Nov 8-14 | **Are the United States and Britain in the Bible?**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*
- Nov. 15-21 | **Three Reasons Why Jesus Comes Twice**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *The Gospel of the Kingdom*
- Nov. 22-28 | **Three Proofs the Bible Is True**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Is the Bible True?*
- Nov. 29-Dec. 5 | **The Truth About the Rich Man and Lazarus**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The Truth About the Rich Man and Lazarus*
- Dec. 6-12 | **Human Identity and the Family of God**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*
- Dec. 13-19 | **Why Do Good People Suffer?**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*
- Dec. 20-26 | **Quitting Christmas**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*
- Dec. 27-Jan. 2 | **Beware the Mark of the Beast**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Who Is the Antichrist?*



United News
NEWS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, AN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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What is Planned Giving?

Planned Giving, a part of an overall financial and estate plan, is the process that allows someone to make a charitable gift during one's life or after one's death. It is useful to think of planned giving as a process as opposed to a set of products.

Many people already do a type of personal planned giving without even realizing it. How? You are making planned giving arrangements anytime you name beneficiaries on your retirement accounts, life insurance or annuity policies, or when you bequeath property in your Will or Trust. The naming of beneficiaries is an act of love toward those we love. We all should take time to review and update our beneficiaries because having them in order simplifies the transfer of assets after death.

Throughout the history of the Church, members and co-workers have supported the gospel message of Jesus Christ and His Church through charitable gifts. These gifts help individuals and families meet their personal philanthropic goals while also advancing the Church mission. While some people desire their charitable gifts be realized immediately—usually through cash, stock or property—others seek to extend their generosity into the future through planned gifts.

Planned gifts can be established as a way to protect your assets, provide for your family or guarantee you income for life. These financial arrangements can take on many forms and have various tax implications. Some simple gifts take little time and effort to set up, while more complex gifts take more planning and thought and generally will require professional assistance and advice.

Our Planned Giving brochure covers many of the commonly used planned giving methods including Last Will and Testament, Will Substitutes, Qualified Charitable Distributions, Life Insurance as a Planned Gift and Trusts.

If you are considering designating the Church as a beneficiary in your Will, insurance policy or retirement plans you can contact me: Howard Marchbanks, Planned Giving Coordinator at (513) 570-2343, or plannedgiving@ucg.org. Upon request, I can also send you a copy of our Planned Giving brochure.

As the year draws to an end it is also a good time to review all of your financial and estate plans—especially if you have had a change in your marital status, the birth or adoption of a child or loss of a loved one. Make sure your Will, Trust and healthcare power of attorney are current and provide a copy to relevant parties. Year-end is also a good time to review your home, auto and life insurance policies to determine if you have enough coverage and if deductibles need to be adjusted.

Howard Marchbanks, CFP®

BY THE NUMBERS

21 million

Newspaper ads sent out Oct. 4 as part one of the two-part print advertising campaign

How This Work Is Supported

The United News is produced by the United Church of God, which is sustained by members, volunteers, coworkers and donors. If you would like to contribute, you can do so at donate.ucg.org. Our gratitude goes to all who assist us financially through tithes, offerings, gifts and planned giving donations.