



2021 camp details

SPECIAL UYC INSERT INSIDE

See pages 8-12

UCG-Netherlands Creates National Council

By Victor Kubik

NETHERLANDS—As of Jan. 1 this year, UCG-Netherlands is a separate, distinct entity in Europe with its own National Council, just like Italy, Germany, France and the British Isles.

When UCG-Netherlands was founded, there were no resident ordained elders in the country. Therefore, it was decided to temporarily associate with another UCG entity—in this case, UCG-Germany, with Paul Kieffer serving as pastor. The Dutch brethren have been most grateful for Paul Kieffer's many years of faithful service to the Church in the Netherlands. Since we now do have two Dutch elders, the time has come for the Church



UCG-Netherlands members say hello!

in the Netherlands to stand on its own. Wim Dekker is the new UCG-Netherlands National Council Chairman, supported by Marcos Rosales.

The official name of the Church in the Netherlands is Verenigde Kerk van God (VKvG). The geographic area of responsibility of VKvG is the Dutch

kingdom and areas bordering the Netherlands where the Dutch language is spoken (Flanders in Belgium). Where possible, UCG-Netherlands supports other Dutch-language regions (Suriname in South America, the Dutch Antilles in the Caribbean and South Africa) with Dutch literature and in other ways.

All of the English UCG booklets and Bible lessons have been translated into Dutch, and progress is being made to finish typesetting and printing them. The English *Beyond Today* magazine is distributed with a four-page Dutch supplement.

The Dutch also provide subtitles to the English *Beyond Today* TV programs which can be accessed through the Dutch website (verenigdekerkvangod.org). It can also be found on YouTube at bit.ly/dutchbt.

There is one nationwide congregation. Services are held alternately in Maarn (in the middle of the country) and in Reeuwijk (in the west of the country). The average attendance is 40 people with 28 baptized members. All age groups are relatively equal-

ly represented and include first and even up to fifth generation Christians!

The Netherlands is officially still in lockdown due to COVID-19 so Church members currently meet online for services. The Dutch congregation looks forward to meeting once again in person.

In June 2016, Beverly and I were privileged to visit our brethren in the Netherlands to get better acquainted with many in the congregation and visit some in their homes. You can read about our visit in my TravelArk blog at v2.travelark.org/travel-blog/victorkubik/18. It will give you insight into the Church as well as a nation associated with tulips, windmills and ships. **UN**

Leadership Training for European Brethren

By Jesmina Allaoua

GERMANY—On Dec. 22-25, 2020, UCG-Germany conducted a leadership training seminar for 37 brethren from the German-speaking and Dutch-speaking regions via Zoom. The presenters were Gary Petty, Steve Myers, Peter Eddington and Gary Antion.

The need for training is essential and the time to develop leadership in congregations is now. Over the course of four evenings, presenters provided training sessions lasting 30-45 minutes. Participants were divided up into discussion groups. Each session closed with a short Q&A session.

The first presenter, Gary Petty, began with his presentation:



Participants in the leadership sessions listened to a seminar before breaking out into interactive discussion groups.

“To the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ.” We are all given the commission to help prepare God's people for works of service so the Body of Christ may be built up, and we can grow in unity and maturity. Everybody can contribute in the Church.

Steve Myers discussed fellowship. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which involves actively doing God's will and accomplishing the God-given purpose of the Church individually and collectively. We are called to an all-in, united mission in the fellowship of the

King Jesus Christ. As Dutch member Ronald Dijkman put it, “You can't eat soup with one finger. But five fingers can form a bowl” (Suriname proverb).

Peter Eddington provided insight into the challenges of preaching the gospel in today's media landscape. Christianity is facing an uphill battle against secularism, atheism and other negative “isms.” In the Church of God, the battle is even more pronounced because the message we bring is at times unpopular. We have a divine, scriptural commission to preach the good news of God's Kingdom to as many people as we are able. The last evening concluded with Gary Antion's presentation, titled “Leaders Are Needed.”

Leaders lead with love, enthusiasm and alertness. They

delegate, evaluate and respect. A leader must lead and cannot stand behind. It is important to be alert to the needs of others. A leader is willing to enlist others to help. Leaders must respect those they serve and whom they are responsible for.

Participants described the leadership training as a great success, providing encouragement and food for thought. Dutch elder and UCG-Netherlands National Council Chairman Wim Dekker concluded: “Seminars contributed to unity and a sense of belonging for all participants. The attention and involvement of the home office is encouraging for us in Europe.” With the positive response to the presenters' encouraging messages, God's blessing was evident. **UN**

In This Issue

Local Church Updates

UYC held in Chile, media updates, ABC announcements and a Feast site announcement—pg. 2

Council Letter

Jorge de Campos discusses anticipating great tribulation as a parent—pg. 3

Letter from MMS

Mark Welch writes about “stopping the spread”—of sin and death, through the Passover—pg. 4

Two COVID-19 Experiences

Frank Dunkle reflects on two times that COVID-19 drew near—in his family and at ABC—pg. 4

Announcements

pp. 5-7, 17-18

Honoring Faithful Employees

Tribute and obituary to Diane Bailey and retirement article for Clay Thornton—pg. 19

The Good News

Weep With Those Who Weep

(Don Hooser)—pg. 13

The Ultimate Vision: Be Like Him, Part 2

(John Miller)—pg. 14

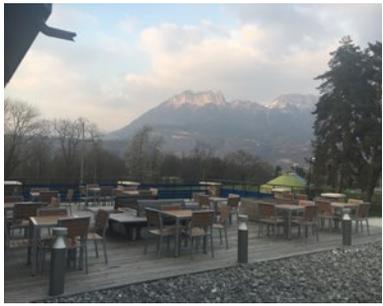
Is Your Faith a Product of Evolution?

(Amanda Miller)—pg. 15

Beware the Invisible Power

(John LaBissoniere)—pg. 16

New Feast Site: Lake Annecy, France



Your French brothers and sisters invite you to join them this year for the 2021 Feast of Tabernacles at the hotel Le Pré du Lac on the shores of Lake Annecy in the French alps. Located in the town of Saint-Jorioz, about a one-hour drive from the Geneva airport, Le Pré du Lac sits on 12 beautiful acres with views of the mountains above the aquamarine-colored lake.

The Feast in France will be all-inclusive, providing the opportunity to experience full-course buffet-style French meals while enjoying fellowship with other brethren from around the world. The price includes nine nights lodging with breakfast, lunch and dinner. The cost for two or more adults lodging together will be €725 per person, and for a person lodging alone, €850 per person. Children 13 and under pay a reduced rate.

In addition to daily Church services throughout the Feast, we have organized a number of afternoon and evening activities to provide additional opportuni-

ties for worship and fellowship. Please see the "Welcome Activity and Excursions" post on our Feast webpage for additional information (ucg.org/members/feast/sites/2021/annecy-france).

Registration via the UCG Festival registration site will open Monday, March 15, 2021, and a €25 per adult (18+) non-refundable booking fee must be paid via the Feast in France Shopify E-Commerce site by Monday, April 5, to secure your registration (a link to the payment site will automatically be sent to you after submitting your registration). The €25 fee covers the cost of Feast administration.

We recognize that, at time of printing, travel to France is currently restricted for people outside of the European Union. However, we anticipate that these restrictions will be lifted sometime in early summer. We encourage you to visit our Feast webpage and Facebook page ("Feast of Tabernacles - UCG France") for additional information about the Feast, as well as regular updates about the travel restrictions into France. If you have any other questions, please contact us via email at feastinfrance@gmail.com.

We look forward to welcoming all those interested in joining the French brethren at Lake Annecy this year.

Feast in France Planning Team

United Youth Camp Held in Chile



Campers and staff enjoy a sunny Sabbath during the UYC program in Chile.

CHILE—The 2021 UCG summer youth camp in Chile was held from Jan. 19-25. The camp originally should have taken place in December 2020, but because of the pandemic we had to put it on hold. Thankfully, we had the opportunity and blessing of holding it a month later. Many of us had fasted and prayed to God for His will to be done and for us to be able to spend a week together sharing and learning more of His Word, especially in these difficult, COVID-19-limited times. God heard our prayers and allowed us to go camping at Rancho el Añil, located in the beautiful area of El Maipo Canyon, 48 miles from Chile's capital, Santiago, where COVID-19 restrictions were down to a minimum.

Every day started with a short interactive discussion before breakfast, a great way to moti-

vate the campers. Later we had different outdoor activities, such as hiking, ziplining and crossing a Tibetan (hanging) bridge. Last year we were not able to do many sporting activities due to the COVID-19 restrictions, and this year, though we were a bit out of shape, we were able to carry out all these activities without any injuries. Two of the classes, one on astronomy and another one on knot-making, were presented by Jaime Diaz, a minister in Southern Chile. We enjoyed the swimming pool in the afternoons. As in previous years, we learned different types of handicrafts. Romina Quezada, a camper, taught us the tie-dye technique, which we used to color the camp T-shirts. Another camper, Jocelyn Catalán, taught us how to make bracelets and how to prepare a *dulce de leche* (butter-

scotch) roll. Michelle Macedo, from Brazil, connected through Google Meet to give us a cooking class where she taught us how to make a typical dessert from her country called *brigadeiro*.

We also had the opportunity to enjoy a youth dance and a game night led by one of the staff, Daniela Morales. Bible classes were presented by Jaime Gallardo, Jaime Diaz and Marcelo Saavedra, the three ministers in Chile. These classes were divided into two parts: the first was on Christian living and the second on doctrine. The theme developed in the Christian living classes focused on Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." The doctrinal classes focused on prophetic events related to the United States and Great Britain. Despite the pandemic, this camp made it possible for both campers and staff to spend a week connecting with each other and learning from God's Word. All the campers and staff are grateful for these opportunities, as they help us make new friends and reconnect with other friends of many years. Our deep appreciation goes out to everyone who made this camp possible and, most of all, to our God for the opportunity to hold this summer camp. What a great blessing it turned out to be!

Carolina Medina Carrasco

New Broadcast TV Opportunities for *Beyond Today*

We are pleased to announce that we have selected several television stations as near-term solutions to our cancellation by Newsmax TV. These stations are offering favorable rates at good times on Sunday mornings, which we have found to be the best time for response to religious programming. Airing on some stations began Sunday, Jan. 31 with the rest beginning on Sunday, Feb. 7. Please see the schedule below. We have not yet been able to secure a nationwide U.S. network that reaches every household. We pray this interim solution will provide exposure to the gospel message in these cities.

Alabama
· Huntsville/Decatur/Florence – WHDF 15 CW, Sunday 6 a.m. CT
· Mobile – WFGX 35 MY TV, Sunday 7 a.m. CT
Arkansas
· Fort Smith/Fayetteville/Rogers/

Springdale – KFTA 24 FOX, Sunday 9:30 a.m. CT
California
· San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose – KBCW 44 CW, Sunday 9 a.m. PT (to begin March 7)
District of Columbia
· Washington – WDCW 50 Independent, Sunday 9 a.m. ET
Florida
· Tallahassee/Thomasville – WTWC 40 NBC, Sunday 10 a.m. ET
· Pensacola/Ft. Walton – WFGX 35 MY TV, Sunday 7 a.m. CT
Illinois
· Springfield/Decatur/Champaign – WBUI 23 CW, Sunday 8:30 a.m. CT
Maryland
· Hagerstown – WDCW 50 Independent, Sunday 9 a.m. CT
Texas
· Dallas/Ft. Worth – KTXA TV21 CBS, Sunday 6:30 a.m. CT
· Houston – KUBE 57 Independent, Sunday 10:30 a.m. CT
The cost per response (CPR)

for the first two Sundays on these broadcast stations was \$5.63 and \$8.08 respectively, which is a very good start. The third week had a CPR of \$8.61. We are still looking for nationwide network options. It is important to keep a broadcast presence while we look for a more long-term nationwide solution. Broadcast television is important to include alongside the printed word, websites, online advertising and streaming video platforms.

We also continue to run our two-minute, short-form *Beyond Today* programs on Newsmax TV at various times throughout the day, at the rate of about a dozen per week. The responses to these have been very favorable for the money spent.

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers for the success of all of our proclamation efforts, including future television opportunities.

Peter Eddington

Save the Date for the ABC Fun Show!



Sunday, March 7
5 p.m. EST

Stream from abc.ucg.org

Grab the popcorn, gather your family, and tune in to the Ambassador Bible College charity fun show! Proceeds will go to LifeNets to complete the building of a new community center in Kwanyako, Ghana. **UN**

Unleavened Bread Cookbooks Available!



The Days of Unleavened Bread are almost here. Do you need a new unleavened bread or cookie recipe? We have many delicious unleavened bread recipes in our cookbook, *Healthful Eats and Unleavened Treats*. Our cookbook also includes a broad range of recipes for special diets,

including gluten-free, grain-free, dairy-free and ketogenic.

We still have cookbooks available for sale. Now is the time to order in time for Days of Unleavened Bread. Cookbooks are \$15, which includes shipping.

All proceeds will go directly to the Ambassador College Student Fund. Email: healthy.cookbook2019@gmail.com for an order form.

Thank you for your support of ABC! UN

March-April 2021 U.S. Circulation: 15,138 Vol. 27, No. 2

United News (ISSN 1088-8020) is published 6 times per year (in January, March, May, July, September, November) by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150.

© 2020 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post publications mail agreement number 1487167.

UCG/IA Council of Elders: Scott Ashley, Jorge de Campos, Aaron Dean, Bob Dick, Dan Dowd, John Elliott, Len Martin (Chairman), Darris McNeely, John Miller, Mario Seiglie, Randy Stiver, Anthony Wasilkoff

President: Victor Kubik

Media and Communications Services Manager: Peter Eddington

Managing Editor: Ariana Del Signore

Copy Editors: Lena VanAusdelle, Mitchell Moss

Graphic Designer: Matt Hernandez

Doctrinal reviewers: Robert Berendt, Dave Mills, Gerald Seelig, Mario Seiglie, Rex Sexton, Anthony Wasilkoff

Web-first article doctrinal team: Gerald Seelig, John LaBissoniere

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Subscriptions: *United News* is sent automatically to members of the United Church of God and is free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the generous, voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and their coworkers. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible.

To request a subscription, write to *United News*, United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or to one of the international addresses below.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

International addresses: AFRICA & ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Email: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 07 5630 3774 International calls: +61 7 5580 8477 Email: info@ucg.org.au
BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands.
BRITISH ISLES: United Church of God—British Isles, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 Email: info@ucg.ca

CAMEROON: United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Bessengue, Douala Cameroon.

OTHER FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France.

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Email: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. Email: kenya@ucg.org

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 Email: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035 4523573. Email: info@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. Phone: +265 999 823 523. Email: malawi@ucg.org

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

NIGERIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 803-323-3193. Email: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: Philippines: P.O. Box 1474, MCPO, 1254 Makati City, Philippines. Cell/text: +63 (2) 8804-4444. Website: www.ucg.org.ph. Email: info@ucg.org.ph

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 U.S.A. Email: norden@ucg.org

SINGAPORE: United Church of God, P.O. Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia.

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 1181 Tzaneen 0850. Phone: (+27) 0797259453. Email: RSA@ucg.org

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

SWITZERLAND: Phone: 49 228 945 4636. Website: http://www.vkg.org

ALL OTHER SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONS NOT LISTED: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (0026)0966925840. Email: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, c/o M. Chichaya, No 15 Mukwa St., Eiffel Flats, Kadoma, Zimbabwe. Phone: (+263) 772-922-362. Email: zimbabwe@ucg.org

Internet access on your computer: The United Church of God, an International Association, has an online home page. The address www.ucg.org gives you access to general information and news about the Church, issues of *Beyond Today* and *United News*, as well as our booklets. The address www.ucg.ca accesses the Church's Canadian website, www.ucg.org.au the Australian website, www.labuonanotizia.org the Italian website, www.goodnews.org.uk the British Isles website, www.ucg.org.ph the Philippines website, www.ucgeastafrica.org the Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda site and <http://south-africa.ucg.org> the Southern Africa website.

Will Our Children Escape the Coming Great Tribulation?

Many young families are concerned about the future and protection of their young children in these perilous days. As we watch world events unfolding before us, loving and caring parents in God's Church undoubtedly have questions about the safety and well-being of their God-given children. For some, having additional children—or children at all—in this day and age might itself be in question.

With these questions in mind, let's refresh our minds with God's comfort and then examine our faith in His promises and encouragement!

Just before His death, Christ gave an important lecture about the time of the end, recorded for us beginning in Matthew 24. He shared multiple parables containing important lessons for His true followers. In Matthew 25 we read about the parable of the ten virgins, which we understand to be a metaphor for people in the Church. The parable teaches that five of the virgins were not ready, after which Christ concludes with a sober warning to “watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matthew 25:1-13). Here Jesus Christ puts an important responsibility on the believer.

The account of this lecture is paralleled in Luke 21 where, during the parable of the fig tree, we are again warned to “take heed” to ourselves, lest we get caught in the trappings of this life, whatever they may be, whether physical pleasures, material goods, worldly politics or any other care of this life. This is not to dissuade young people from working hard, being successful and investing in their future financially or through education. But there must be an emphasis on the critical need to prioritize our spiritual calling first. Christ then adds “*watch* therefore, and *pray* always that you may be counted worthy to

escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36, emphasis added throughout). Once again, Jesus Christ places responsibility on believers.

We need to be wise members in God's Church, watching ourselves and praying that we may not get caught in society's trappings and become unwise and unprepared virgins. Jesus Christ is the Judge (John 5:22); He will determine who will be *counted worthy* not only to escape, but also to be in the first resurrection.

Just prior to Christ's return, we read of a time of great tribulation (Matthew 24:21). Elsewhere in the Bible, the psalmist praises God's protection, “A thousand may fall at your side, and ten

“A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you” (Psalm 91:7).

thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you” (Psalm 91:7). In His message to the Philadelphians, Christ promised them that since they kept His commandment to persevere, He will keep them “from the hour of trial [the Great Tribulation] which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

In Revelation 12:14 we see that part of the Church flies “into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” This scripture seems to indicate that a portion of the Church will be protected for three and a half years from Satan's deception. Those that do escape are set apart and their children are equally *holy* (set apart), even if one of the spouses is unbelieving

(1 Corinthians 7:14). That is our great hope for our children.

With a portion of the Church having escaped, Satan is enraged with the remaining Church members and he goes out “to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). These Church members also keep God's commandments and hold onto Christ's teachings, but they do not escape the Great Tribulation. Why?

What is the difference between these two groups? What else must we do, besides keeping the Commandments and the testimony of Christ?

Scripture offers various clues to this question. One such clue is that the promise of protection is given to the brethren identified as those with “*brotherly love*” (Philadelphia). These individ-

uals are “kept from the hour of trial” because they kept Christ's “command to persevere” (Revelation 3:10).

Those promises are not repeated in Christ's message to the Laodicean church—they believed they were wealthy and had need of nothing, but He tells them they are “wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:17). These are advised by Christ to buy from Him “gold refined in the fire” (Revelation 3:18). Could it be that the Laodicean believers allowed their love to “grow cold” because lawlessness was abounding? Jesus then adds, “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:12-13). That enduring aspect surely includes that believers' love does not “grow cold.”

The love of God is a great differentiator! “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:10-11).

“*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35).

We also can gain encouragement from God's words to His servant, Joshua: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6, New International Version). God is faithful; He does not lie (Titus 1:2). “This hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19).

We know that when Satan attacks the Church times will be very difficult, but the fact is no one knows the day or hour, except the Father. One admonition is to pray that our time of flight may not be on certain days, such as during pregnancy, nursing times, in winter or on the Sabbath (Matthew 24:19-20, 36-44). God can open and close wombs at His time and according to His will. “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

He will show His marvelous lovingkindness and keep us as the apple of His eye (Psalm 17:3-9). Even “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

God wants our children to escape the Great Tribulation because He is faithful. He has a wonderful role for them and the rest of His people as pioneers and examples in the wonderful world tomorrow.

We can state without any doubt, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust” (Psalm 91:2). We are implored by Christ to pray and continuously examine ourselves that we may persevere in God's love till the end, not permitting our love to wax cold. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born [begotten] of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). “Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14). **UN**

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

On Dec. 8, 2020, Ray Clore was re-credentialed by the United Church of God. He and his wife, Rhonda, serve in the Northern Virginia congregation.

On the same date, Ed Szalankiewicz was also re-credentialed. He serves in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, congregation.

Chris Rowland



Jorge de Campos serves on the Council of Elders. He pastors the Lexington, Kentucky, congregation and serves Portuguese-speaking brethren in Brazil, Portugal and Angola. He and his wife, Kathy, have five adult children. He can be reached at jorge_decampos@ucg.org.

Israel's obedience to God's command stopped the spread of death from going into the land of Goshen, where the Israelites dwelled, on that significant Passover night. God protected those who obeyed by placing the blood of the lamb on their lintels and doorposts (Exodus 12:7, 22-23).

Is it important to yield to God and learn to obey Him? Yes, if you want to stop the spread of sin and death in your life.

Stopping the spread

Personally, last year's Passover and this year's upcoming Passover have had greater meaning due to the emphasis on "stopping the spread" of COVID-19—since this time of year we focus specifically on "stopping the spread" of leaven (sin). This can help us understand how the Passover observance is at the center of God's purpose to halt the spread of sin and death.

In the United Church of God, only baptized members partake

of the Passover symbols of unleavened bread and wine. Before we baptize anyone, we ask them two questions: 1) Have you repented of your sins? and, 2) Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? These two questions focus on how the Passover observance is key to God's purpose to end sin and death.

Certainly, the unleavened bread at Passover pictures the broken body of our Savior, Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us. Nevertheless, by repenting of our sins we acknowledge that we are sinners and we show our desire to become unleavened spiritually through the life of Christ in us. This willingness to obey is symbolized by the unleavened bread that we ingest during the Passover service and that we eat throughout the Days of Unleavened Bread. The unleavened bread also symbolizes our allowance of Jesus Christ to live in us (Galatians 2:20) and to perfect us spiritually through the power

of the Holy Spirit that we receive at baptism and the laying on of hands. Obedience helps stop the spread of sin and death. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ made it clear that He did not come to do away with the laws of God (Matthew 5:17). Christ said, in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments!"

The blood of the Lamb

By accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior, we acknowledge our faith in Him as the Messiah who shed His blood for us, symbolized by the Passover wine.

It was the acceptance of the blood of the lamb as a sacrifice for them and by allowing the blood of the lamb on their lintels and doorposts, personally and collectively, that saved the children of Israel and stopped the spread of death on that Passover night. Accepting Christ as our Savior will do the same for us.

Baptized members partake of these symbols in faith at the

Passover service. Once again, our sins are forgiven and we are cleansed, symbolically stopping the spread of sin and death. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through forgiveness of our sins in the death of Jesus Christ for us (Romans 6:23).

The Passover lamb was to be without blemish, just as our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was without sin and, therefore, the perfect sacrifice for us. He was tempted in every way, as we are by Satan, but He never yielded to Satan or sin (Hebrews 4:15).

It is our faith in Jesus Christ and it is His faith in us, through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, which will give us victory over sin and death.

We renew our baptismal commitment each year as we observe the Passover. We are to walk in newness of life—not death!

Jesus Christ showed the importance of humility in the spiritual cleansing process by washing the disciples' feet on His last Passover just before His death. We follow His example and should learn to be our brother's keeper and follow the Matthew 18 process humbly and faithfully as God intended. We are to help one another grow spiritually. Cleansing oneself and helping others grow spiritually will also help stop the spread of sin and death going forward.

The Passover service is rich in meaning. Let us all do our part in helping stop the spread of sin and death. God will surely do His! **UN**



Mark Welch serves as operation manager for Ministerial and Member Services. He was ordained in 1985 and hired into the full-time ministry in 1989. He can be reached at mark_welch@ucg.org.

Two COVID-19 Experiences

By Frank Dunkle

This year, Ambassador Bible College experienced COVID-19. As coordinator of the program, I helped form protocols intended to prevent students from spreading the disease in the classroom and the home office. These included daily temperature checks, wearing masks and distancing in the classroom—measures that have become all too familiar these days. They worked, too—at least, for several months.

It was not until late in the second week of December that one of the young men in the class messaged me that he was sick and had begun isolating himself. He logged on to a video feed for class the next day. So far, so good. We followed procedures and we hoped that even if he did test positive for COVID-19, it had not spread to others in the class.

Actually, that was true to some extent. The sick fellow lived in the home of a family in the Cincinnati East congregation, along with two other students, and neither of those students or anyone in the family contracted the virus. However, others in the class did.

On Sunday, one of the young ladies in the class informed me that she had developed symptoms. She and her roommates began isolating. By the next

day, two others started feeling sick, and stayed home. We had planned in advance to use Zoom for students to be able to see and hear classes if they could not attend in person—although doing so was never intended to be a long-term practice.

Our experience finishing the 2020 academic year in the spring convinced students and faculty that ABC is not effective as an online program. Our current students agree whole-heartedly. We conducted the final six days of class before winter break completely online. Fortunately, those days, coupled with the break itself, provided sufficient time for sick students to recover and for others to complete quarantine and return to class in January.

When things settled, 10 students—half the class—had gotten positive COVID-19 tests. Two others were certain they had the virus, judging by their symptoms and exposure, but they were not tested. Michael Fike, who has been assisting Cincinnati pastor Steve Myers and attending many of the ABC classes, also contracted the virus. None of the other eight students became sick, but six of them certainly had close exposure and may have been sick but asymptomatic, as one of those who tested positive had been. Thus, of 20 students, only two have a fair confidence of never having contracted COVID-19.

All the others recovered completely. We still follow the protocols to prevent spread of the disease, but we are much less apprehensive of any danger than at the start of the school year.

Having described our experience, please let me note an important lesson that has become clear to me. Different people have experienced this disease in very different ways. At least one of our students was completely asymptomatic. She was completely surprised at testing positive because she had no signs of being sick. Most who got sick only had a sore throat, congestion and slight fever for two or three days. However, Mr. Fike had considerably worse symptoms for several days. A woman in the class who was a few months shy of 60 years old had flu-like symptoms for more than a week and lost her senses of taste and smell. At the same time, a man in the class who is a few years older than her experienced only very mild symptoms for a couple of days.

What I saw among the students might have led me to believe that COVID-19 is not a very serious disease, and that governments and health agencies have overreacted to it. However, that was not the end of my experience. At the same time the ABC student body was dealing with the virus, my wife learned that her parents, who are both more than

80 years old, had been exposed to it. They subsequently became sick and were isolated in their home. Their children brought them food and medicine that they left on the doorstep without close interaction. Through phone calls several times a day, we waited anxiously as our sick parents suffered and struggled to recover. My father-in-law did recover, but my mother-in-law grew worse. She was taken to the hospital for treatment.

Fortunately, she is back home now. She did not succumb to COVID-19, but she still needs oxygen and is fairly weak. Her doctor says it may take several months before she feels back to normal. This experience shows me that there have been valid reasons for many of the restrictions imposed on the population attempting to control the spread of the virus—but that does not tell the complete story.

My experience of COVID-19 matches what data about it shows: a large majority of people who contract the virus experience relatively mild symptoms and recover. However, for some, especially those who are older or have health conditions, the disease can be dangerous and even fatal. If I only experienced one end or the other of this spectrum, I would be tempted to expect everyone to view the disease as I did. That also seems to match what is hap-

pening around us. Some people are convinced that COVID-19 is not serious and that the restrictions are an overreaction at best—a nefarious conspiracy at worst. On the other hand, other people see catching the virus as a death sentence and are amazed at how many people do not share their alarm.

Proverbs 18:17 says that the first to plead his cause seems right—until his neighbor comes and examines him. That may describe well how people have shaped their ideas of COVID-19. What they've seen or experienced first often sets their beliefs, and they can be difficult to change. I don't write this to accuse or correct anyone; just to confess that I was forced to accept that people with widely differing attitudes toward the virus may all be correct, at least to some extent. This has shown me the need for greater patience and understanding. The virus is an enemy; a person with different views than me is not.

The happiest thing to report in this is that ABC continues to operate. We considered carefully whether or not to commence in-person classes in late August, and it seems that God has blessed our decision. He has made up for our mistakes and sustained us through challenges. We pray that this will continue for years to come. **UN**



Left: Dara's children at Feast time, 1972. Above: Today, Dara Scheider reflects on last 50 years in God's Church.

By Dara Scheider

One clear day in late spring of 1968 I took a drive to the home of my husband's aunt. My husband, who worked nights as a diesel mechanic on trucks, needed to sleep during the day, so I thought it best to visit with her for a while. We were living near Escanaba, Michigan, when our life changing spiritual journey began.

I had three of our children with me in the car and our oldest daughter was in school. I had no idea we would not make it to our destination that day.

As we headed north on a freshly graveled road, I found myself losing control of our four-door Buick. With some quick thinking, rather than roll our heavy vehicle, I let off the gas and aimed straight into the roadside ditch. I held my right arm across my youngest daughter who was in one of the early style car seats

next to me. The boys were in the back seat. It was over quickly and I found us nestled on top of a hammock—the root system of a downed tree. I could not back out of our predicament.

Gathering my thoughts after our rather exciting ride into the brush, we all evacuated the car and headed up the road to a local farmer's house. The farmer's wife welcomed us in so I could call a tow truck. We were too stuck for the farm tractor to pull us out. While waiting for rescue, we had a pleasant conversation. In the process of sharing this and that, the farmer's wife handed me a magazine that I had never seen before. It was a *Plain Truth Magazine*. At the time, I had no idea how that accident, and the years following those events, would change our lives so drastically.

I had been seeking answers to life's most important ques-

tions, but I received them in a most unusual way.

When I married my husband, I joined Catholicism so our family would be united with one religion. But I began to wonder, "Where is the truth? Is there a truth? If so, where do I find it?"

After requesting by mail, we started receiving our own *Plain Truth Magazine*. By then my husband and family were a part of my search. We began the journey together.

The next two years were spent in Bible study, prayer and visits from a minister of the Worldwide Church of God, Hal Baird. He conducted Bible studies and answered many thoughtful questions. As our new lifestyle progressed, we were ready for baptism. We had been keeping the Sabbath by ourselves and learned about God's Holy Days, too. This became a challenge for our surrounding neighbors when we had to explain why our children were doing things so differently. It was summertime and I had been having Bible school study times for my family and theirs, as well. As you might surmise, that little schooling was ended when the truth came out.

Now began our years for travel each Sabbath morning. Our first trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Sept. 5, 1970, was for our baptism in Peter Ochs music

store basement. Our youngest boy was four months old, and a bit fussy being held by a stranger while I was baptized.

We learned that my husband's cousin lived halfway between our home and Milwaukee, our destination—and that they had been a part of the Church for a few years. We were invited to stay in their farmhouse basement for several Sabbaths until a new site opened near Appleton, Wisconsin. Milwaukee was more than four hours each way and Appleton was two and a half hours away.

Sabbath was quite an event for us. We were in the Eastern Time Zone, but Appleton was in the Central. I would lay out everyone's clothes the night before and prepare lunches for the road on Friday. After breakfast on the Sabbath, we loaded up and off we went. Services for the Holy Days were held at Wisconsin Dells. My sister and her family lived in Baraboo, Wisconsin. We lived in Escanaba, Michigan, so we would travel to their place and stay for a few days so we could be involved with our Church family and keep the Holy Days. My sister cleared out one room for our visits so we could have our family's privacy.

After our first big move, we were finally able to be closer to a Church area. Thanks to some new Church friends, my husband found a job at a new truck repair

shop in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. The fall of 1973 found us moving just before the Feast of Tabernacles. I packed for the move and for the Feast that year.

The move was a great blessing as we now lived 90 miles from Wisconsin Dells. Our drive for services was three hours less than when we began in Michigan.

For a few months, we stayed in a cabin out at Lake Arbutus, northeast of Black River Falls. I did our laundry in wash tubs with a scrub board and hung the clothes out to dry. It was different living that way for a few months, but it worked. When a better home for our family became available, we moved in and lived there for 13 years while the children grew up. While we certainly had our life's challenges like most families do, each child learned to be decent, loving, kind and caring, for which their dad and I have always been thankful.

As the years have come and gone and I am now a widow, I am still loving God with a very thankful heart. Each day is becoming more of a physical challenge for me. As my family is all grown up and living their own lives, I sometimes find it difficult being alone. I truly rely on our loving God for comfort and support. He is always faithful with His help. Take time to reflect on your life's journey, too. **UN**

Announcements



Harrison Everett Carper

Aug. 12, 2020

Births

Harrison Everett Carper

Debbie Carper of the Portland, Oregon, congregation, and husband Steve are happy to announce the birth of their son, Harrison Everett Carper. Harry was born at 3:59 a.m. on Aug. 12, 2020. He weighed 7lbs 5oz. and measured 20 in. long.



Luca James Zannetti Moss

Jan. 3, 2021

His grandparents, Harvey and Terri Werner, are enjoying lots of baby snuggles. Everyone is thrilled about the new addition to the family and look forward to more good things to come.

Luca James Zannetti Moss

Luca James Zannetti Moss was born on Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021, to parents Dana and Mitchell



Willow Mae Presley Call

Jan. 14, 2021

Moss of the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation; he weighed 9lbs 6oz. and measured 21 in. at birth. Older brother Stirling is beyond excited to have him home, regularly showering him with kisses. He's beloved by his grandparents—Scott and Peggy Moss of the Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation, and Kim and John Echols of the Columbus, Ohio, congregation—as well as



Lochlin Pierce Knudson

Jan. 15, 2021

his many other extended family, including great-grandparents Norma and Lloyd Nelson of Southern Minnesota.

Willow Mae Presley Call

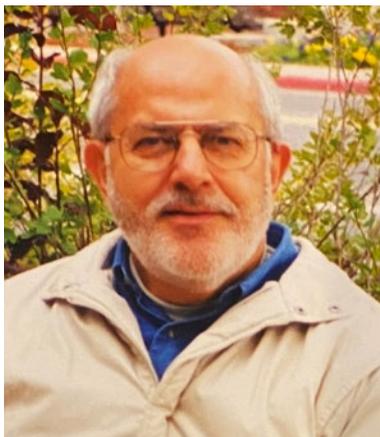
Wesley and Shyanne Call of the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation are overjoyed to announce the birth of their daughter, Willow Mae Presley Call. She was born on Jan. 14,

2021, weighing 8lbs 1oz., and measuring 20½ in. long. She is the granddaughter of Jimmy and Laura Call, and Kandy Groves of Portsmouth, Ohio. Wesley and Shyanne are extremely thankful for their little blessing and everyone's prayers for their little family.

Lochlin Pierce Knudson

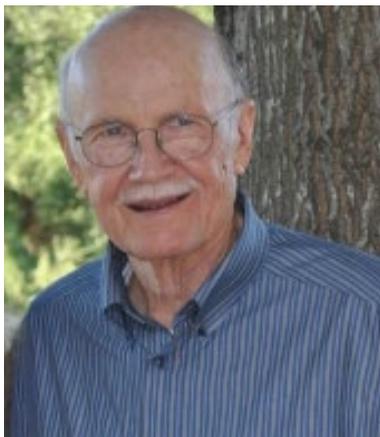
Rheo and Courtney Knudson, of the Phoenix East, Arizona, congregation, are thrilled to announce the birth of their third child, Lochlin Pierce Knudson. He was born at home on Friday night, Jan. 15, at 8:05 p.m., weighing 8lbs and measuring 20¼ in. long. The new family of five enjoyed their first Sabbath together. Big sister Kaia and big brother Avik are enthralled with him.

Please see next page



Michael Walter Ballo

Sept. 20, 1935-Dec. 16, 2020



Dael Baughman

July 27, 1937-Dec. 12, 2020



Preston Fritts

Jan. 1, 1924-Dec. 24, 2020

Obituaries

Michael Walter Ballo

Michael Walter Ballo succumbed to COVID-19 on Dec. 16, 2020, at a care center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he lived for the past year.

He was born in Chicago, Illinois, on Sept. 20, 1935. The middle child in a family of five, he worked for Allied Radio after graduation from DeVry University, Chicago.

He began attending the Worldwide Church of God in the fall of 1969 just after the Feast of Tabernacles, committing to obey God's laws and way of life.

Mike was known for his willingness to use his talents as an electrician and handyman helping others with their jobs and home repairs.

He opened the Hyatt O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, Illinois, in 1971 and retired from the hotel chain in June 2000.

Parkinson's disease slowly took its toll over the past three years, which greatly affected his quality of life.

Michael is survived by his wife, Teri; sons, Johnny, Donald (Camille), Richard and Benjamin Mater; daughter, Jamie Hild (Frank) and grandson Elias; granddaughters, Brittany Ballo and Courtney (Rheo) Knudson and great-grandchildren Kaia, Avik and a precious newborn son Lochlin.

The family prays that God's Kingdom comes quickly, that His will be done and for comfort for all who suffer loss.

Dael Baughman

On Dec. 12, 2020, Dael Baughman, 83, of Kilgore, Texas, died after a courageous fight with the coronavirus. He was a

devoted husband, proud father, avid cattle rancher and faithful follower of God. Dael was special and there is too little space here to describe everything that made him so special.

Dael was born to Hubert and Alma Baughman in Mossville, Mississippi, on July 27, 1937. He was proud of Mossville (also known as Moss), and loved telling stories about growing up there. Over the years, Dael returned to Mississippi on a regular basis to check on family, friends and loved ones. He never forgot where he came from, and it was a guiding influence in his life.

Dael graduated from Mossville High School with a class of 12 students and was the first in his family to go to college, graduating from Mississippi State University with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering. He worked during college to pay for his tuition, room and board. While in college, he excelled and graduated first in his engineering class and was a member of numerous honor societies.

Upon graduation in 1959, he moved to Longview, Texas, where he worked for Texas Eastman, a division of Eastman-Kodak, until his retirement 40 years later. Shortly after moving to Longview, in 1961, Dael married Alice Dozier, also from Mississippi, and they began their life together in Longview, which grew to include five children.

During his long tenure at Texas Eastman, Dael progressed in various engineering roles in the engineering department, the plastics lab and environmental affairs. Starting in 1989, he served as Manager of Environmental Affairs until his retirement in 1999. He was valued as a talented engineer and manager.

During his free time after work hours and over the weekends, Dael raised cattle in East Texas while helping his wife raise their children. Dael and Alice were a strong team. Dael used the farm and cattle business to invoke a strong work ethic in his children. He taught his children the importance of education, and he was very proud of their educational and career accomplishments.

After retiring, Dael and Alice moved to Kilgore, Texas, where they built their dream home and continued to operate a cattle ranch that is still running to this day. Cattle ranching was not a hobby to Dael—it was a passion second only to his love for God and his family.

Despite all of the material accomplishments in his life, Dael understood the purpose of his life was to follow the Word of God. He loved God and was a faithful member of the United Church of God and its predecessor for more than 50 years where he served as an elder and ordained minister. He was a devoted member and leader in the Church. For more than five decades, he was highly respected by the congregation.

He was inquisitive, smart, hardworking, caring and always informed. He worked tirelessly at whatever he took on. He talked to anyone no matter what their stature in life was. He judged no one. He never forgot where he came from and treated everyone with kindness and dignity. He was a man of the highest character and honesty and lived a commitment to God and his family that will stand as an enduring legacy. He was trusted by everyone who knew him. As many would say, you could trust Dael to flip a coin over the phone.

He will be greatly missed by all those whose lives he touched.

Left to cherish his memory are his wonderful and loving bride of 59 years, Alice Baughman of Kilgore; children, Rebekah (Dan) Stolley of Trophy Club, Texas, Jonathan (Shelly) Baughman of Katy, Texas, Libby (Clint) Barr of Port Bolivar, Texas, Philip (Stephanie) Baughman of McKinney, Texas, and Julie (Adam) Lambert of Katy, Texas.

He was especially proud of his 13 grandchildren, Danielle Stolley and her husband Henry, Victoria (Joe) Shoemaker, Preston Stolley, Meredith Baughman, Maris Baughman, Alec Baughman, Callaway (Dylan) Anderson, Alexa Barr, Dalton Baughman, Michaela Baughman, Theron Baughman, Ella Lambert, Anna Lambert and great-grandson Jameson Shoemaker. Also, to carry on his legacy are numerous cousins, friends, neighbors and other loving family members. Dael was preceded in death by his parents.

Preston Fritts

We are saddened to announce the death of Preston Fritts, a longtime elder in the Church of God who died on Dec. 24, 2020, after a short illness. Those who knew Mr. Fritts were amazed at his energy and love of life. He was born on Jan. 1, 1924, in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He served in the U.S. army in World War II.

Preston married Pauline Salyer on March 8, 1947. Mrs. Fritts came into the Radio Church of God in 1947 and Preston started attending in 1963. He was ordained a deacon in 1967 and an elder in 1980. Pauline preceded Preston in death in December 2016.

He was a well-loved member of the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, congregation, where he was famous for his friendliness and dedication to God and His way. Preston will be greatly missed, but we know that his next waking moment will be the resurrection where he will join Pauline in rising to meet Christ in the air.

Members of the Murfreesboro, Tennessee congregation shared comments and memories about Mr. Fritts.

Leah Graby: "He loved singing in services and always sang out with a joyful heart and a cheerful voice! He came to ser-

vices each week serving others with joy."

Cassie Ashbey: "My grandfather was well known for his energetic spirit and his willingness to serve. He never knew a stranger and was always ready to dance, sing a song strongly off-key or tell you a story about his long and beautiful life. Throughout the years, he instilled a love of God and faith within our family. I miss my Sabbath hugs and look forward to the day when I see him again."

Dianne Seab: "Mr. Preston Fritts was such a special person that no words are really adequate. He was a valued member of the Church and contributed to the organization in many ways. Besides being an excellent example he was always good-humored and considerate towards the brethren. I appreciated his smile and greetings every Sabbath. He was an amazing host to the ladies when he invited us to his home for lunch. When he was an usher at the [Feast of Tabernacles] one year he always saved seats each day for my sister and me. Preston was always willing to serve others. He brought pleasure to everyone he met and will be sadly missed by all who knew him."

Cathy Myers: "Preston Fritts . . . helped me to understand what having a loving relationship with our Father in heaven was like by his example as an adopted father, friend and Christian man . . . He was the kindest, [most] caring, giving, loving, funny, witty, smart man, husband, father and older friend that I knew and loved dearly. 'By their fruits you shall know them;' both he and his loving wife, Pauline, the love of his life, were a great light in my life. I shall miss the ringing of my doorbell for him to visit, gracing a chair in my kitchen or outside patio to share many events and wisdom in his life, and sitting in Church in the front row or in my living room on the Sabbath . . . in Murfreesboro, especially over the last year of his life."

Tyrone Elrod: "I always thought Mr. Fritts was a man of great character. He would always speak when we saw each other; I enjoyed talking to him."



Judy Kauchak

March 1, 1937-Dec. 28, 2020

Judy Kauchak

Judy Kauchak, 83, of Highland, Indiana, passed away on Dec. 28, 2020, surrounded by her loving family. Judy, the ninth of 10 children, was born on March 1, 1937 to John and Helen Jancosek of Whiting, Indiana. Judy was known for her strong work ethic, kind heart and generous, loving spirit.

Judy searched for the truth for many years, finally coming to know God's truth in 1984. She was baptized with her sister, Bernie Burosh on March 23, 1985. Judy was ordained a deaconess on Jan. 5, 1991.

Judy was married to Richard Kauchak on May 26, 1962. They celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary this past May. Even though Richard was not in the faith, he traveled with Judy to many of the Feast sites each fall and they had many wonderful times enjoying the Feasts together.

Judy was a member of United Church of God in Munster/Merrillville, Indiana, but she also attended the Feast of Tabernacles with Pacific Church of God and Sabbath Church of God. She often listened to sermons by other ministers in different groups because she knew that the Church is made up of people who have the Holy Spirit, no matter what organization they're part of.

Judy had longtime friendships with many in the faith. She loved the brethren and often sent cards of encouragement to those who were struggling with medical issues. She served wherever she could and was always hospitable. She was the best cook and could fix anything!

Judy showed an outgoing concern for brethren, as well as those friends she had in the world. Her light always shone brightly, and even as she strug-



Mary Kays

Aug. 6, 1923-Jan. 7, 2021

gled with her own health issues, she still thought of others who needed prayer and encouragement.

Judy was preceded in death by her parents, John and Helen Jancosek; two brothers, five sisters including her sister in the faith, Bernie (Dee Dee) Burosh and a grandson, Kyle Gordon.

Judy is survived by her husband Richard; children, Lynn (Tracy) Grant, Rick (Veronica) Kauchak, Bob (Lisa) Kauchak and Susie (Tony) Zitella; six grandchildren, Erica (Mike) Maynor, Matthew Kauchak, Joel Gaudio, Gianna, AJ and Sophia Zitella and a great-grandchild, Breanne Maynor. She is also survived by one brother, Frank (Pat) Jancosek and one sister, Mary Jane Lukas, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Judy was a remarkable, beautiful example of a Proverbs 31 woman. She was a wonderful wife, mother, nana and friend. She loved her family, friends, neighbors and brethren so very much. We will miss her greatly, but know that we will see her again at the last trumpet. She ran the race and finished it! God-speed the Kingdom!

Mary Kays

Mary Kays, 97, of Fort Worth, Texas, died on Jan. 7, 2021. Her daughter was her main caregiver when she became bedridden at home for about six months as her health declined.

Mary lived in Klamath Falls, Oregon, in her childhood years during the Great Depression. Her single mom and the five children lacked adequate food and clothes, as many people did at that time. When the war years helped financial issues and jobs, Mary joined the Klamath Falls, Oregon, Ambulance Corps. She also went to beauty school and



Ellis & Gwen La Ravia

March 19, 1931-Feb. 24, 2020
April 10, 1940-April 19, 2020

received a license to work at hair and nail salons. Her sister went to nursing school and Mary encouraged and supported her to keep going during the long hours and intense training. Most weekends, Mary would take her sister out of the boarding house where she lived to a restaurant and remind her to keep going and not give up accomplishing her goal of becoming a nurse, because in those times an airline stewardess had to be a registered nurse to work in that occupation. In later years Mary worked at grocery stores as a cashier.

Mary's husband, the late Al Kays (died in 1985), worked for the military. He heard Herbert W. Armstrong on the radio while driving his car to new military assignments across the United States. He shared the radio broadcast and literature with Mary, who was excited to learn more also. They both became Worldwide Church of God members in 1966 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Mary and her daughter lived in Arizona, Oregon and Texas, where they attended Church services. The last Church area they attended was in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas.

A lasting memory for her daughter to remember her by is the frequent kind words—please, thank you—that she spoke to her when receiving a glass of water or a bite of food.

Ellis E. La Ravia

Ellis was the oldest of five siblings; two brothers and two sisters. His father, Ellis Sr., was employed on the railroad in southeast Texas. Ellis enrolled in Louisiana State University and consecutively served in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) which led him to enlist in the United States Air Force. He be-



Silvia Loomis

Nov. 2, 1974-Dec. 5, 2020

gan his business career managing an extensive plant nursery in the Piney Woods of East Texas.

In Phoenix, Arizona, during this tenure at the business enterprise, Ellis met his soon-to-be wife. Ellis and Gwen married in July 1961. They began to attend the Church of God in Phoenix and subsequently re-located to Pasadena, California, to attend Ambassador College. Upon graduation, Ellis was employed by the college and Worldwide Church of God in multiple capacities over the course of two decades, including facilities management, U.S. Feast site planning, Ambassador Foundation and Ambassador Auditorium Performing Arts Program activities. He also experienced extensive worldwide travel with Herbert W. Armstrong, and served as associate pastor in the Pasadena congregations and on the Council of Elders. Ellis was an ordained elder for 49 years and also served in a number of congregations in Wisconsin and Arizona.

Ellis is survived by his brother, Dennis, and sisters, Jean (Fairbanks) and Helen (Johnson); sons Glen and Jefferson; three daughters-in-law; daughters Romney (Chapman) and Vivian (Doyle); 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Ellis' parents, brother Ben and son David preceded him in death. His wife, Gwen died two months following his death. We have the hope of the resurrection when we will join our loved ones to spend eternity in our "forever" family of God.

Gwen D. La Ravia

Gwen was born the middle of three daughters to Glen and Francis Brickey in the central valley of California. She was active in music, learning and performing on the alto saxo-

phone, and pursuing a nursing career. In the midst of marriage and children, Gwen supported the local congregation in used clothing giveaways and caring for the disadvantaged who were lacking necessary healthcare and support. Gwen coordinated state dinners for dignitaries on behalf of the Ambassador Foundation including heads of state to augment the Church of God's humanitarian efforts around the globe. She accompanied her husband on travel with Herbert W. Armstrong, including overseas visits to Great Britain, Greece and Moscow. In her mother's waning years, Ellis and Gwen served tirelessly to raise her quality of life until her death in 2012.

Gwen is survived by her two sisters, Lucy Becker and Susie Booker; two sons and three daughters-in law; two daughters, 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Her husband, parents and son, David, preceded her in death. Her example of tireless service to others is a great example for the family. We have great anticipation for the resurrection God promises when our mom will rise to serve others in perpetuity in the glorious Kingdom as the children of God grow into God's very own family.

Silvia Loomis

Silvia (Beans) Loomis, 46, died on Dec. 5, 2020, following a battle with cancer. Silvia was a loving and much-loved wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt and friend.

She is survived by her husband, Brice Loomis; daughters, Isabella Loomis and Maria Putzier; parents, Yarrell and Alice Beans; brothers, Gene Beans, Jerry Beans, Aaron (Kathy) Beans, Erwin (JinJu) Beans and Ivan (Kira) Beans; sisters, Tina (Albert) Kline and Rena (Jerry) Mick; numerous nieces and nephews; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews. She was preceded in death by her sister-in-law, JoDee Beans; nephew, Matthew David Beans; and maternal and paternal grandparents.

Silvia was a member of the Salina, Kansas, congregation. Lifelong family friend and UCG pastor David Jones conducted a graveside memorial service along with Kansas pastor Kent



BE ANCHORED TO GOD



Location: Bellefontaine, OH
Dates: June 20-27
Staff Arrive: June 19 at 6:45 p.m.
Camper Age Range: 12-19
Camper Tuition: \$310 by May 1
 \$330 after May 1
Staff Fee: None
Send Payment To:
 Joshua Creech
 Camp Cotubic
 8406 Bravestone Way
 Indianapolis, IN 46239
Check Payable To:
 TBD
Director: Joshua Creech
Contact Info:
 joshua_creech@ucg.org
 (513) 720-1381

CAMP COTUBIC is located in Bellefontaine, Ohio, on 150 serene acres of fields and trees, with a beautiful 14-acre lake for water activities.

Dorms are formed by age range, giving campers opportunity to build positive, lasting relationships with others their age who are also looking to follow God. Each unit will have two counselors to guide the dorm in a positive direction, helping campers develop meaningful relationships. Counselors promote fun and teamwork while maintaining the priority of helping campers build a deeper relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ. This will be accomplished through daily activities that include sports, team building, Christian living, campfire, dorm time, dances and other activities. The week will conclude with the Sabbath rest, a nice semi-formal banquet and an evening dance. All campers sleep on bunk beds with mattresses and will need to bring their own bedding, pillow and towels.

The closest airport is John Glenn Columbus International Airport (CMH). Free transportation between camp and the airport will be provided. Staff should arrive at Cotubic Saturday evening, June 19 at 6:45 p.m. Campers should arrive sometime between 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, June 20, and depart no later than 11 a.m. on Sunday, June 27.

Joshua Creech



CAMP HYE SIERRA is located amid the beautiful pines and redwoods of California's Sequoia National Park. Our focus at Hye Sierra is showing God's way works today. The remote location helps to craft a unique Zone environment as we focus on growing as Christians and building lasting relationships.

Daily morning Compass Check sessions direct our thoughts and attitudes toward godly values. As we carry out the day's activities, we put into practice these principles in ways designed to help us apply right values in everyday life. We end the day together by the campfire, where we continue to build relationships, learn biblical principles and have fun! We know that building lasting godly relationships with others is important, and we build time into the schedule for that. In addition to our open evening activities, mix and mingle time and two dances, we offer waterskiing, field sports, kayaking, archery, dance and other activities. We conclude camp with the formal banquet which brings everyone together for a final evening of conversation, laughter and even some tears.

We have many service opportunities for dedicated counselors and activity staff, as well as lifeguards, drivers, kitchen staff, dish crew, janitorial, those certified in lifesaving skills and staffers experienced in other various UYC activities.

For those flying into the Fresno air-

Location: Fresno, CA
Dates: June 27-July 4
Staff Arrive: June 25 by 4 p.m.
Camper Age Range: 12-19
Camper Tuition: \$350 by May 14,
 \$390 after May 14
Staff Fee: None
Send Payment To:
 Benjamin Light
 Camp Hye Sierra
 P.O. Box 8055
 Salem, OR 97303
Check Payable To:
 Camp Hye Sierra
Director: Benjamin Light
Contact Info:
 ben_light@ucg.org
 (503) 949-2504

port, we will arrange free transportation to/from camp. Campers should arrive at camp on June 27 between 2-4 p.m. Camp ends at 8 a.m. on July 4. All departures should occur between 8-10 a.m.

Make plans now to be at Camp Hye Sierra, and we will see you there!

Ben Light



NORTHWEST CAMP will again be held on the scenic Oregon Coast! It's hard to imagine a more perfect place for a camp than Camp Magruder. Campers enjoy a clean, nearly private lake as the eastern border of camp and a pristine beach on the west. The dorms, dining hall and other facilities are among the best in the region and improvements are made yearly. The sandy beach is a great location for campfires as the sun sets over the ocean.

Beach activities offered include volleyball, speedway (one boundary of the field is the ocean), skim-boarding and riding boogie boards in the waves. This year the horses from Chinook Outfitters are returning! Younger dorms will have

two horseback riding activities and older dorms will have two waterskiing activities.

Other activities include swimming, waterskiing, kayaking on Smith Lake, archery, dance class and softball. We will also have two dances during camp.

Christian living lessons and memory verses are the core of each day. Each activity, lesson and campfire story is designed to help campers understand the principles and how to apply them when they return home. This year the focus is on the importance of being anchored to God.

Every year campers build friendships that will last a lifetime. Living in a world where evil and negative influences are everywhere, friendships with teens of like mind are vitally important. Our goal is to establish a godly atmosphere in which campers can be enriched for a lifetime.

Campers should arrive between 2-4 p.m. on July 18. Departure will be on Sunday, July 25, between 9-10 a.m. We provide transportation from the Portland airport (PDX) between 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on July 18.

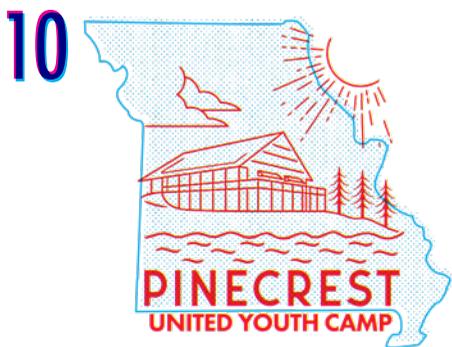


Departure flights should be after 1 p.m. on July 25. Please email the transportation form and confirm that it has been received if you plan to fly!

The camp experience is made possible by our dedicated volunteer staff. Counseling staff should arrive July 16 by 10 a.m. for training. Activity staff should arrive in time for 2 p.m. Sabbath services on July 17. The deadline for all applications is June 1, so apply as soon as you can. We are looking forward to a great experience for everyone on the beautiful Pacific coast this summer!

Rex Sexton

Location: Rockaway Beach, OR
Dates: July 18-25
Staff Arrive: July 16 by 10 a.m.
 Note in description regarding activity staff arrival
Camper Age Range: 12-19
Camper Tuition: \$395 by June 1
Staff Fee: None
Send Payment To:
 P.O. Box 2806
 Clackamas, OR 97015
Check Payable To:
 United Camp Fund—
 Northwest Camp
Director: Rex Sexton
Contact Info:
 rex_sexton@ucg.org
 (360) 798-2921



CAMP PINECREST has been a summer destination where teens and staff build deep, meaningful relationships with God and each other for 25 years. We welcome everyone to southeast Missouri to experience the storied traditions that have made Pinecrest an annual highlight for many through the years.

As a family, we start every morning together in a Christian living talk before spreading out across the camp for the remainder of activities. Engaging Bible classes and Q&A sessions provide additional time to explore God's Word. Dorms are organized "family style" (multi-age) to encourage leadership and provide support for every camper.

Campers participate in a range of indoor and outdoor activities to challenge them physically and mentally. Activities include softball, speedway, volleyball, low ropes course, archery, riflery, swimming, dance class, rock climbing/rappelling, stand-up paddle boarding and journalism. There's something for everyone!

Relationships are an important part of UYC. We provide open times for activities such as pickup games, gaga ball, volleyball, basketball or just to spend time with friends. Another dance earlier in the week is also being planned.

If you would like to join our staff, please note that staff workers must be 18 years of age or older and need the recommendation of their pastor. Every staff member must complete pre-camp training and make their Facebook page avail-



Location: Fredericktown, MO

Dates: July 11-18

Staff Arrive: July 10 for dinner

Camper Age Range: 12-19

Camper Tuition: \$330
(Due May 1)

Staff Fee: None

Send Payment To:
Mike Phelps
1448 Callaway Ct.
Howell, MI 48843

Check Payable To:
UYC—Camp Pinecrest

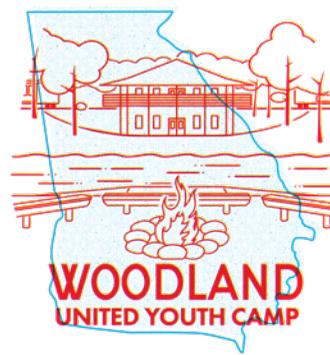
Director: Mike Phelps

Contact Info:
mike_phelps@ucg.org
(513) 256-7628

able for review. Some activities require specialized training or experience.

Staff instruction and camp setup will occur Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Campers should arrive Sunday, July 11, between 1-4 p.m. (please no early arrivals unless approved of by the director). Both staff and campers will depart on Sunday, July 18, between 8:30-10 a.m. Please see ucg.org for transportation and travel information.

Mike Phelps



CAMP WOODLAND, located west of Atlanta, Georgia, is set on 120 wooded acres. The dining hall and wrap-around balcony overlook a beautiful eight-acre lake, which makes a great backdrop for evening fellowship.

This year we are adding speedway and ultimate frisbee to the many fun and exciting activities, while still leaving plenty of time in the schedule to relax and get to know your fellow campers and staff. Come to Woodland and learn more about yourself and your purpose in God's plan! Activities will include swimming, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating, basketball, volleyball, archery, traverse wall, speedway, ultimate frisbee, softball, high- and low-ropes courses with a zipline over the lake, dance classes, two evening dances, campfires and more.

Dorms are formed by age range, giving campers a chance to create lifelong friendships with others of similar age and allowing for more tailored discussion activities based on maturity level.

Each dorm will have two counselors to walk alongside and guide campers in a positive direction throughout the week. Counselors encourage fun and teamwork with a daily focus on the importance of building relationships with the Father and Jesus Christ.

Camp Woodland begins on a Friday so we kick off the week with the Sabbath and then a dance in the evening to help break the ice right away.

All campers will be sleeping in twin bunk beds and will need to bring their



Location: Temple, GA

Dates: July 23-30
(Friday to Friday)

Staff Arrive: July 22

Camper Age Range: 12-19

Camper Tuition: \$275 by June 1

Staff Fee: None

Send Payment To:
Jay Ledbetter
Camp Woodland
3233 Frazier Rd.
Knoxville, TN 37914

Check Payable To:
United Camp Woodland

Director: Jay Ledbetter

Contact Info:
jay_ledbetter@ucg.org
(469) 452-9501

own bedding, a pillow and towels.

Campers arrive Friday, July 23 between 1-4 p.m. Departure should be no later than 9:30 a.m. Friday, July 30. The closest airport to the camp is the Hartsfield-Jackson International airport in Atlanta, Georgia. Transportation to and from the airport to Camp Woodland is available.

Jay Ledbetter



Location: Lake Geneva, WI

Dates: Dec. 27, 2021-Jan. 2, 2022

Staff Arrive: Dec. 26

Camper Age Range: 12-18

Camper Tuition: \$350 by Dec. 1
\$375 after Dec. 1

Staff Fee: None

Send Payment To:
Aaron Creech
617 Juanita Way
Roseville, CA 95678

Check Payable To:
UYC-Winter Camp

Director: Aaron Creech

Contact Info:
aaron_creech@ucg.org
(513) 374-9392

WINTER CAMP will take place at the same facility we used this past year. It is a very nice facility with plenty of opportunities for new activities each year to allow us to experience the Zone in late December.

This year Winter Camp will begin Dec. 27 in the afternoon. Our Lake Geneva facility offers several new activities for campers, including two indoor climbing walls and a full-size gym for volleyball and basketball. If there is enough snow there will be snowboarding, tobogganing and tubing.

Additional activities include broomball, field sports, dance class, two dances, an escape room, capture the flag and team building activities. The activity schedule will include plenty of time for socializing.

The core of Winter Camp is built on fellowship, fun, friends and a foundation of Bible classes and Christian Living instruction specific for teens. Camp-

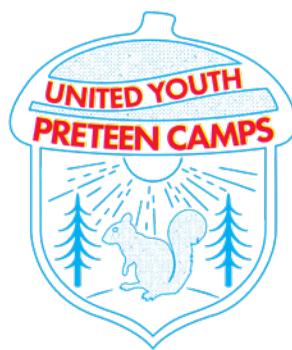
ers will enjoy building friendships and with one another while enjoying their time at Winter Camp. We will again go off-site for snowboarding with the older campers and will have a selection of live performances from some campers during our final dance.

Our facility has great dorms and the food is very good, with a fresh salad bar for lunch and dinner. We will also have a s'mores night as well as hot chocolate throughout the week.

Campers should arrive between 2-4 p.m. on Dec. 27. Staff should arrive Dec. 26. More details will be provided upon acceptance.

Arriving flights should be on Dec. 27 between 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Departing flights should be on Jan. 2 between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. Free transportation will be provided between camp and these airports: Mitchell (Milwaukee) and O'Hare (Chicago).

Aaron Creech



CAMP BUCKEYE has become an annual “go-to” destination for many children and volunteers, of which several are former campers that return to continue the legacy of the preteen camp experience. Camp Buckeye will begin on the last Sunday in July at Camp Luz in Orrville, Ohio. This venue provides many opportunities to develop meaningful, lifelong relationships. Daily activities include Christian Living, archery, arts and crafts, canoeing, fishing, field games, swimming and others.

Each dorm will have about 10 children, along with a senior counselor and two assistant counselors. Our goal is to immerse the children in an atmosphere focused on learning how to live God’s way. The children will develop physically, mentally and spiritually as we emphasize

Dates: July 25-28
Camper Age Range: 6-12
Camper Fee: \$125 (\$100 each add’l child)
Teen Staff (ages 14-19): \$70
Adult Staff (age 20+): \$40
Application Deadline: June 1
Coordinators: Len & Julie Martin
Contact: len_martin@ucg.org
 (614) 588-2637

the Golden Rule and the two “great commandments” as campers and staff live, serve and play together.

We are looking for patient volunteer staff with a strong desire to provide the safe atmosphere we call “The Zone” that is crucial to the success of the program.

All applications with payment (checks: United Camp Buckeye) must be submitted online by June 1. Additional information has been posted on ucg.org.

We tend to fill up every year, so the sooner you apply, the better your chances of being accepted!

Len & Julie Martin



CAMP FLORIDA, located on Lake Placid in central Florida, seeks to provide a Christ-centered camp environment where guests can experience God surrounded by His creation. Within a 90-minute drive from Disney World and Sea World, the camp is built for fun!

Camp Florida offers many activities including Christian living, crafts, swimming (lake), basketball, kickball, volleyball, human foosball, 9-square, soccer, gaga ball, a water slide, hiking, movie night, novelty Olympics, dance class, fishing, a trampoline and, of course, time at the beach! We teach children not to be moved by the storms of this world, but to be sheltered in God’s love and promises. We want to grow our next generation to be strong in the Word and ready for life’s challenges.

We are looking for energetic and patient teens and adults to serve in all areas of camp, including as counselors,

Dates: June 6-9
Camper Age Range: 5-13
Camper Fee: \$150 by May 1, \$175 after May 1
Staff Fee: \$100
Checks Payable to: UCG Camp Florida
Mail Payment to: Jeff Lockhart, 7399 Briella Drive, Boynton Beach, FL 33437
Coordinator: Jeff Lockhart
Contact: jeff_lockhart@ucg.org
 (210) 788-1481

activity coordinators, lifeguards and nurses. Dorms are arranged by age. Teen staff as young as 16 are welcome without a parent/guardian accompanying them.

If you have more than one child attending, we can assist based on your needs. To attend, campers must have successfully slept away from parents/guardians for the length of camp and be able to shower without assistance.

All payments should be mailed when you apply. Your application is not considered complete until payment is received.

If for any reason you’re not accepted to camp, your fee will be refunded. More info is posted at ucg.org.

Jeff Lockhart



CAMP IRONWOOD in southeast Minnesota welcomes campers to experience four days of fun-filled activities in a positive, loving and godly environment. Camp is held in the spectacular outdoor setting of Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch.

Camp activities are designed to enrich children spiritually and physically in a nurturing atmosphere. Our goal is to enhance children’s relationship with God and with others. Activities include daily Christian living, music classes, a zipline, swimming, horseback riding, field games, team challenge, a climbing wall, arts and crafts, archery/BB guns, slingshot, creek walk and slip-and-slide. Fun-filled evening activities include a carnival, campfire sing-along, Novelty Olympics, treasure hunt and Dancing with Jelly. It’s a busy four days, but full of memories to take home.

Preteen Camp Ironwood has a tradition for being a “family camp” with teens (ages 14-19) and parents serving together

Dates: July 11-14
Camper Age Range: 5-13
Teen Staff: 14-19
Early Application: May 1 (save \$15); final deadline June 1
Coordinators: David & Jolinda Schreiber
Contact: david_schreiber@ucg.org

as staff. The activity staff strive to make sure each camper participates and enjoys each activity, but each teen staff is also a “big sister or brother” to campers, dropping in on their activities and lunches. Additionally, “dorm parents” visit dorms each evening for a short talk and prayer.

Camp Ironwood endeavors to include the entire family. Parents who serve on staff and have a camper and a young child are able to bring the young siblings as well! Younger children (ages 3-5) can participate in the daytime mini dorm activities and stay overnight with mom and dad.

If you, your preteens or teens are looking for an exciting camp experience and enjoy the company of other young people striving to live God’s way, Camp Ironwood is for you! We look forward to seeing you this summer at Camp Ironwood!

David & Jolinda Schreiber



CAMP NACOME was once the home of the Beaver Dam Springs Resort, the history of which goes all the way back to the resort culture of the late 1800s. The facilities now boast modern cabins and buildings on a 600-acre property in the heart of the Tennessee woodland.

Like many of the preteen camp programs, Camp Nacome offers unforgettable experiences that keep campers and staff coming back year after year. Activities like archery, caving, kayaking, swimming, low ropes, arts and crafts and air riflery are a few. However, no activity roster is complete without Christian living classes each morning. After having equipped campers with a fresh vision and reminder of God’s message, we dive into our activity-packed day, building upon what we’ve learned

Dates: May 30-June 3
Camper Age Range: 6-12
Camper Fee: \$175
Staff Fee: \$80
Application Deadline: April 23
Coordinator: Matthew Puckett
Contact: mtpuckett@gmail.com
 (615) 557-6535

and inspiring us to grow in character and faith. A special activity like novelty Olympics or movie night brings us to the end of each day.

Camper dorms are arranged by age. Teen staff as young as 16 are welcome without a parent or guardian accompanying them. If this sounds like a place you’d like to experience, come join us this year and build memories with God’s family in a truly picturesque example of His creation!

Matthew Puckett

Camp Ochoco



CAMP OCHOCO will be held in central Oregon, 25 miles east of Prineville. Northwest Preteen Camp for 2021 has a new name and a new location! The theme for this year will be “Bible Explorers.” This year we are going to work to memorize the books of the Bible in order.

Camp Ochoco will be at a facility that was built in the 1990s with larger dorms, each having two bathrooms and showers. The camp has a pool, gymnasium and two sports fields. The upper sports field has soft grass and may be the location for a new slip-and-slide. There will be octo-ball, a great arts & crafts room and many opportunities to explore a new camp setting as we also learn to explore more of our Bibles.

We will also have activities where brother and sister dorms get together to learn targeted lessons for their age range, which prepares the older kids for teen camp. We invite you to a brand new experience of fun and excitement where we put living God's way into practice. As this

Dates: July 11-14

Camper Age Range: 6-12

Camper Fee: \$150 by May 1
\$175 after May 1.

Make Checks Payable To:
United Church of God, NW Preteen Camp

Mail Payment To:
Jeff Richards
60116 Navajo Rd.
Bend, OR 97702

Coordinator: Jeff Richards

Contact: jeff_richards@ucg.org

is a new facility, we may fill up quickly, so please apply early to ensure you get in. Deadline will be when we are full or May 1, 2021. *Important: Please check uyc.ucg.org for updates as we plan in a time of changing restrictions.*

Jeff Richards

Seven Mountains

CAMP SEVEN MOUNTAINS is a place where you can bring the whole family to experience the beauty of nature and learn about God! This year we will discuss the story of Ezra and Nehemiah in Christian living classes. Campers will enjoy human foosball, capture the flag, swimming, kayaking, volleyball, gaga ball, woodworking and more!

The younger campers sleep in dormitories, complete with showers and bathrooms. The oldest campers will enjoy outdoor platform tent camping. Parents, grandparents and younger siblings are welcome to bring their own tents and come to watch the activities, enjoy the food and camp on the grounds.

This family camp welcomes campers ages 0-12. *Note:* All campers under the age of 7 must have a parent or guardian stay at camp. Campers ages 0-3 stay with their parents, and campers ages 4-12 may stay in their respective dorms. Parents not attending can drop off children ages 7-12. The age range for dorm campers is 4-12. We have activities for small campers with a guardian (ages 0-3). Par-

Location: Springs Mills, PA

Dates: Aug. 1-4

Camper Age Range: 0-12 (see note regarding younger campers in camp description)

Fee: \$35/camper/staff/
parent/guardian (ages 0-3 free)

Make Checks Payable To:
UCG Lewistown

Mail Payment To:
Rachel Massie
528 N. Kemp St.
Kutztown, PA 19530

Deadline: June 25

Coordinators: Rachel & Lindsey Massie

Contact: rachlmassie@gmail.com

ents and older siblings can volunteer to serve at camp. Parents/guardians who are attending camp, but not applying as staff, are still asked to fill out a staff application and mark “Parent/Guardian” as your only choice of activity.

Due to changing restrictions for the state of Pennsylvania, early registration is encouraged so we can figure out how many people we need to accommodate. As we receive more clarity, updates will be provided on the camp website.

Rachel & Lindsey Massie

Camp Texoma

“Camp makes me want to mentor, invest, and serve people year round.”

Staff Member

Dates: July 23-26

Camper Age Range: 5-12

Application Deadline: June 1

Camper Fee: \$150, add'l campers in same family \$130

Teen Staff (ages 13-18) Fee: \$80

Adult Staff Fee: None

Coordinator: Jim & Laurel Moody

Contact: jim_moody@ucg.org
(903) 681-1437

CAMP TEXOMA welcomes preteen campers ages 5-12 to the Texas/Oklahoma border as Texoma Youth Camp will serve as host to the South Central Region UCG preteen camp. Prepare to experience a tremendous four-day camp experience where you will learn about our awesome God, make new friends, and have fun in a caring and positive environment. Camp Texoma is located on a beautiful lake several miles northwest of Denison, Texas. Camp will run Friday, July 23-Monday, July 26, 2021.

Each day at Camp Texoma will include a variety of outdoor and indoor activities beginning with Christian living classes to reinforce that God's way of life works. Other activities include swimming

in the lake and various sports including basketball, kickball, tetherball and ping pong. Crafts, team building and lots of water activities will also be held.

We are looking for dedicated and patient teens and adults to serve in all areas of camp, including counselors, activity coordinators and staff.

The deadline for everyone who is interested (from young to not-so-young) to apply online is June 1, 2021.

Updates will be posted at uyc.ucg.org/camp/camp-texoma. Applications will be available online this spring.

Camp Texoma offers an exciting new camp experience with warm Texas hospitality. We hope you'll join us!

Jim & Laurel Moody

Preteen Camp Program Dates

Camp Buckeye, Ohio	June 25-28
Camp Florida	June 6-9
Camp Ironwood, Minnesota	July 11-14
Camp Nacome, Tennessee	May 30-June 3
Camp Ochoco, Oregon	July 11-14
Camp Seven Mountains, Pennsylvania	Aug. 1-4
Camp Texoma, Texas	July 23-26

Teen Camp Program Dates

Camp Cotubic, Ohio	June 20-27
Camp Hye Sierra, California	June 27-July 4
Northwest Camp, Oregon	July 18-25
Camp Pinecrest, Missouri	July 11-18
Camp Woodland, Georgia	July 23-30
Winter Camp, Wisconsin	Dec. 27, 2021-Jan. 2, 2022

Mission

The mission of the United Youth Camps program is to support parents and the Church in teaching youth to develop their full godly potential—which is their calling into the Body of Jesus Christ and the work of the Church—while learning that God's spiritual laws are practical ways of living (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and 11:19-20; Psalm 34:11; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). Within our mission are contained camper goals, staff objectives, biblical standards and a positive message to our teens that God's ways work!

Depending on restrictions in certain states, 2021 camp plans are subject to change or cancellation. All updates will be posted at uyc.ucg.org.

GN

The Good News

Weep With Those Who Weep

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

By Don Hooser

It’s imperative for God’s people to have and show compassion and love by offering emotional support to someone who is grieving. “Compassion” literally means “feeling with.” God has great compassion for each of us and our hearts must become like God’s heart. 1 Corinthians 12:26 is a companion scripture to the one above.

When someone else suffers a major crisis, you can’t fully empathize if you haven’t gone through a similar crisis, but you can imagine their pain and do your best to empathize—to “put yourself in their shoes.”

It’s a magnificent blessing that our sorrows are mixed with long-range *hope!* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But God’s people still suffer with all kinds of grief, some of which are *devastating*. Think of losing a child or a beloved spouse. Think of your loved one being in great pain or being a full-time caregiver for a spouse with dementia. According to Ezekiel 9:4, we should also “sigh and cry over all the abominations” in our society! Even losing a pet can be traumatic.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). It’s natural to grieve about your own trials but this Beatitude implies that God is especially pleased when we mourn with those in mourning.

To support those who are hurting, begin and continue with *prayer!* If you have a close relationship, offer to visit. See James 1:27. And phone and email. And send a card or meaningful gift with a personal note. Also, please be aware that grieving people seldom get comforting communication after the first two or three months. It’s very special to receive a “thinking of you” note or call later on.

Grieving and weeping are healthful

Trying to stifle sorrow just delays it and worsens it. “Stuffing”—bottling up—one’s feelings often results in long-range depression. Grieving brings about healing. And being a companion to someone grieving helps him or her to heal.

The Bible emphasizes joy but that doesn’t mean we must always feel “happy” no matter what *happens*. Grieving at appropriate times is an essential part of a joyful life.

In many cultures in the past (and even today), a grieving person, often with family and friends, spent a set period—such as a week or a month—focusing on

Ben White/Unsplash



Being a companion to someone grieving helps him or her to heal.

his or her grief. That had a healing effect—he or she was better prepared for resuming everyday life. The Bible relates numerous examples of godly people passionately mourning for long periods.

In contrast, Western culture, especially the U.S., doesn’t have any specific ritual for grief. Also, we often don’t know how to respond to someone who is grieving. Many people are uncomfortable about expressing grief or being around people who are grieving. Some even avoid funerals, not heeding the admonition in Ecclesiastes 7:1-4.

When someone says, “Don’t cry,” it’s almost always bad advice. Shedding tears has several emotional and physical benefits.

Many people wrongly think shedding tears shows emotional weakness or lack of masculinity. Do a search for Bible verses with the words “weep” or “wept” or “weeping” and you’ll see that countless good, strong people wept. “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

When a grieving person sees tears in your eyes, that person knows you care. And if you are crying on the inside, the grieving person probably knows that.

Reasons people don’t weep with those who weep

There are many reasons or excuses for why people don’t effectively grieve with those who are grieving. Many people in our secular, Western culture ignore the Bible with its emphasis on the Golden Rule and the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31; see also Matthew 7:12). True love involves self-sacrifice. Jesus “laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

Grief is a part of true love. The more you love a person, the more you grieve when that person suffers or dies. Grief is not a “problem” to be avoided or a sickness to be cured. Grieving is healing.

Grief is not a “problem” to be avoided or a sickness to be cured. Grieving is healing.

Some people are simply selfish and insensitive, unwilling to sacrifice time and personal pleasure to comfort others. Actually, true joy comes from giving and generosity (Acts 20:35).

Many people avoid those who are grieving because they “don’t know what to say” and are afraid they “might say the wrong thing.” This can be better than saying something hurtful, but the grieving person then has the added sorrow of loneliness. Friends turn out to be “fair-weather friends” who don’t offer “a shoulder to cry on” or a hand to hold. A famous quote says, “Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone.” Weeping alone should not happen in God’s Church!

What to say and not say to a grieving person

We hear jokes about how a wife just wants to talk about her trial but her husband irritates her by quickly offering a *solution*. Similarly, that is a common mistake of those who want to “help” a grieving person. As mentioned above, grief is not a temporary “problem” that needs to be “fixed.” Generally, you should not be giving advice to a grieving person. Or stating obvious truths as if the grieving person doesn’t know those truths. Or offering insensitive platitudes. Don’t act like you’re an all-wise savior.

You don’t need to say much. You can say simple things like: “I’m heartbroken for you and I’m here for you. I’m praying for you.” *Being a good listener* is often more important than anything you say. Encourage the griever to relate precious memories.

Continued on next page

“Weep With Those Who Weep”
Continued from previous page

If you say, “What can I do to help?”, you probably won’t get a suggestion. A grieving person has a hard time thinking and won’t want to put you out. Make offers! “I’d like to mow your lawn for a few weeks,” or “Let me shop for your groceries.”

Beware of this terrible superstition: When a person is suffering, people sometimes assume that God may be punishing him or her for some sin, so he or she deserves that suffering. We see that assumption in John 9:1-3. Luke 13:1-5 relates how Jesus strongly repudiated that assumption. And Jesus’ acts of mercy toward “untouchables” repudiated that assumption. Therefore, one of the most hurtful things you could do would be to state or imply blame for the suffering.

The book of Job reveals a lot about what to do and what not to do. Job’s three friends came to Job to “mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job 2:11). They “wept” (verse 12). “So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him” (verse 13). So far, so good! That must have been very comforting to Job. But after that, they greatly added to Job’s emotional suffering. Most of the rest of the book relates their accusations that Job must have been guilty of doing sinful things.

Another mistake is to speak of grieving as something that should be short-lived. Statements such as, “You’ll soon feel better” or “Don’t be so sad. You’ll see her again in the resurrection,” or “You need to cheer up” are highly insensitive. People have good intentions but they often add to a grieving person’s pain.

A grieving person is trying *not* to forget the loved one and usually wants to share precious memories with others! This lesson was impressed on me when I was 11 years old and my three-year-old brother Roddy died. That was devastating to our family. My mother desperately wanted to talk to her friends about her memories of Roddy but her friends would change the subject! They thought they were doing her a favor by helping her to “get her mind off of Roddy.” This was extremely frustrating and discouraging to my mom.

There is a serious problem with the famous “stages of grief” that supposedly progress in a straight-line sequence from the event that caused the grief to complete recovery. That is not realistic. Often a few hours of relative peace are followed by a crashing wave of grief. After a great loss or trial, there is often some grief for the rest of the person’s life.

If and when you have great sorrow, seek out truly sympathetic friends who are good listeners and are not judgmental. Many grieving people join a support group for a while, and many benefit from recording their intimate thoughts. King David certainly wrote about his griefs in some of the Psalms.

It’s a great blessing to be surrounded by thoughtful, sympathetic and loving people who understand the Bible and who have God’s Spirit. For example, those of us who have experienced major trials are amazed and inspired by the large number of get-well cards and/or sympathy cards we’ve received, many with wonderfully worded hand-written notes.

Much more can be said about these subjects. Many large helpful books have been written on the subjects of grieving and being a true friend to those who are grieving.

However, much of that is summed up by these words: Weep with those who weep.

This article is the first in a two-part series focusing on the directive given by Paul in Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” The next issue of United News will feature part two, titled “Rejoice with those who Rejoice.” GN

The Ultimate Vision: Be Like Him, Part 2

Defining the Image of the Heavenly Man

By John Miller

The ultimate vision, the Bible reveals, is to be like Him. This may at first seem abstract, but Paul, in his discourse to the Corinthians, makes it much more tangible: “As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Still, Paul writes earlier in the same letter that it has not “entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). John writes later that we do not fully know “what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). New Testament scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel calls it a destiny “unspeakable, contained in the likeness of God” (Johann Albrecht Bengel’s Gnomon of the New Testament).

Fortunately, the Bible that promises a destiny so great also defines it—starting at the dawn of creation: “Then God [*elohim*] said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26).

The God *Elohim*—a veiled reference to God and the Word—declares with descriptive purpose that they would create a living being distinct from all others with the *capacity of mind* and the *bodily form* to shadow what the original already *is* and *does*—a mortal copy of the heavenly original, like the tabernacle of the Old Testament was a physical copy of the heavenly original (Hebrews 8:5; 9:11, 23).

The mortal Adam that God created as a shadow of His being in mind and bodily form exhibits god-like characteristics unique to the human species. Man has a mind unlike any other species with the capacity to think, create and emulate, as well as a bodily shape that is the likeness of God giving him dominion over the rest of the created order. Stated simply, bodies have the capacity to act on their surroundings while mind has the capacity to influence.

Paul tackles these contrasts in his letter to the Corinthians where he makes the case for the resurrection from the dead. He describes different types of bodies from fleshly to the celestial. He contrasts the natural with the spiritual; the copy with the original; the first Adam with the last Adam; the living being with the life-giving spirit. In this context, Paul makes a statement about the natural and the spiritual body that forms the basis for the Bible’s definition of the “heavenly Man.”

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). Did you catch that? Paul repeats the statement, “a spiritual body” twice in the same paragraph for emphasis. According to Paul, the heavenly Man is, or has, a spiritual body whose image and likeness we are destined to bear.

Paul did not learn this truth in philosophy school, or at the feet of Gamaliel. He learned this in his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road and when he was apparently taught by the risen Christ in Arabia (Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-18; Galatians 1:11-12, 17-18).

The idea that God—in this case the Son—has a body with recognizable features and form went against con-

ventional thinking then, as it does today. But the Bible, in the words of Paul, is clear: “There is a spiritual body” which a few paragraphs identify with the heavenly Man.

That the risen Christ described by Paul as “the heavenly Man” has recognizable *features* and *form* is confirmed in numerous biblical passages—not the least of which is the testimony of Stephen the martyr. Stephen was granted the privilege to gaze into heaven where he “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

The spiritual body of the risen Jesus, described by Paul as a life-giving Spirit, had personal, identifiable *features* that Stephen immediately recognized as the person of Jesus Christ. That His body also had form is implicit in the statement that He *stood* at the right hand of God.

What is here implied is explicitly stated in Paul’s letter to the Philippians: “Christ Jesus, who, being in the *form* of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:5-6, emphasis added throughout).

This immediate context also describes the spiritual mind of the God who became man with the expectation that we shadow it—“Let this mind [of lowliness] be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Now that the Bible has established that the heavenly Man has a spiritual body with recognizable *features* and *form* that can act on its surroundings and that this Being has a spiritual mind that we are expected to emulate, we turn to the most descriptive biblical definition of the heavenly Man.

John, the aged apostle, was on the Isle of Patmos when he had a personal post-resurrection encounter with the *heavenly Man*, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet” (Revelation 1:10).

Upon hearing the voice, John had a perfectly normal response, “Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band” (Revelation 1:12-13).

Then John writes a series of descriptive definitions about the “heavenly Man”—both comparative and definitive: “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow” (Revelation 1:14).

John definitively states that the spiritual body of the heavenly Man had both “head and hair” but when describing the characteristics of the head and hair his language becomes comparative. He does not say that the head and hair *were* wool and snow rather they were “*like* wool, as white as snow” (Revelation 1:14).

John continues the series, “His eyes [were] like a flame of fire” (Revelation 1:14). That the heavenly Man had eyes is definitive, while the description of those eyes is comparative—“*like* a flame of fire.”

John continues to describe what he saw, “His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace” (Revelation 1:15). That the Being he encounters had feet was both definitive and obvious—He stood upright on them. The description of the feet is comparative: “[they] were *like* fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.”

Now John describes the voice (definitive) that he heard in comparative terms: “And His voice was like the sound of many waters” (Revelation 1:15).

“He had in His right hand seven stars” (Revelation 1:16). Here John not only states that the heavenly Man had a right hand, he shows that the spiritual body had the capacity to act on its surroundings by holding seven stars in His right hand. Verse 16 continues: “Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword (definitive), and His countenance (definitive) was like the sun shining in its strength (comparative).”

At this juncture, John's response turns from the typical to the dramatic consistent with one who encounters the spiritual realm, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead" (Revelation 1:17).

What follows provides an insightful perspective into the mind of Christ as well as a spiritual body's capacity to act on physical and spiritual surroundings, "But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid'" (Revelation 1:17).

Not only did the One John encountered have a "right hand"—it had the capacity to reach into the physical realm and touch him—not to strike him, but to comfort and tell him, "Do not be afraid."

Now the heavenly Man speaks with a remarkable disclosure of identity, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen" (Revelation 1:18).

"Amen." So be it. The Bible does what men call "unspeakable"—it defines the image of the heavenly Man in terms that we can understand.

The final article in this series will focus on what it means to "bear the image of the heavenly Man" in both present and future realities. GN

Is Your Faith a Product of Evolution?

How can we face the evolutionary explanation for belief in God in light of world history?

By Amanda Miller

Is religion—specifically Christianity—a byproduct of evolution, which came about because of humanity's genetic predispositions and imaginations about the world around them? Perhaps you've questioned your belief in the supernatural realm under the scrutiny of an evolutionary worldview and wondered if there is any evidence or reason for carrying on with such beliefs. How can we face the evolutionary explanation for belief in God in light of world history? These are legitimate questions and concerns worth investigating, and ones that we can find answers to as we pursue an honest and sincere faith.

Science, religion and philosophy

At first glance, it might appear that an evolutionary explanation for humanity's belief in God and the tenants of a religious worldview is more rational than a divine explanation, simply because it's based on modern "scientific" beliefs about our findings in the natural world. However, this conclusion is not based on indisputable facts established by science, but rather a Western philosophical presumption that the only way we can determine the cause or existence of something is if it has a naturalistic explanation.

By definition, science is explicitly limited to investigating materialistic phenomena. So, if we presume that there must be a materialistic explanation for non-materialistic phenomena, such as God and religion, then we are limiting the evidence to a biased, anti-supernaturalistic worldview.

It's crucial for us to recognize that both explanations for humanity's belief in the divine—whether by

scientism's anti-supernaturalistic worldview or by religion's supernaturalistic worldview—are conclusions based on a presupposition of "faith," and neither can be proven or disproven by scientific experiment. Therefore, science can play a role in our investigation of how the supernatural realm influences our material world, but it most certainly cannot be the only standard of proof of whether or not the supernatural world exists.

Text, archaeology and evolutionary criticism

So, let's examine the evolutionary account to see whether it offers a more plausible explanation for what humanity believes about God and religion, but more specifically the God and historical roots of the Christian faith.

Critics of archaeology and religious texts, with an evolutionary worldview often explain the development of religion as follows: In primitive times, humans formed a belief in objects having spirits and worshiped their ancestors as it improved their survival. Their shamanistic style of beliefs and development of tribal deities gave humans an illusion of their involvement and influence in a supernatural world through fetishes, magic, idols and the like. This led to a belief in many gods—polytheism—and later reduced to elevating one god and moral code above all others. This ultimately resulted in monotheistic faiths (Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, p. 500).

When we examine the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith, we see very clearly that the surrounding cultures practiced what this worldview refers to as the early evolutionary stages of religion. For example, the earliest civilizations that paralleled biblical times, such as the Egyptians, took to animism, polytheism and these "primitive" forms of god and faith. However, despite the trends of the world they lived in, the Hebrew faith defied evolution's patterns for religion at every turn.

From the very beginning, the central message of the Hebrew texts—and of Christianity for that matter—was that of the "I Am" (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58). The historical records show that they did not begin with a belief in objects from nature having a spirit, but rather a divine Being which caused all things to come into existence and Who had always been in existence (Hebrews 11:3). This vastly differed from what was believed by those around them.

Though their ancestors believed in honoring their parents, they did not worship their ancestors. Instead, they often left their families to seek after God, or the God of their forefathers (Exodus 20:12; Hebrews 11:24-26; Matthew 19:29). Archaeologists have found a plethora of statues and idols for the Egyptian and Canaanite gods. However, an image of the Hebrew God is nowhere to be found in the archeological record—because abstaining from all images of God as an idol was such an integral part of keeping this faith (Exodus 20:4-6).

So, there is no evidence that the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith evolved out of belief in spirits, ancestor worship or idol worship—but rather a genuine experience of divine inspiration. Even if one were to filter the historical texts and archeological record to somehow fit the evolutionary model, consider that "only the Hebrew religion and its branches have produced a genuine theism" (McDowell, p. 502). Polytheistic religions have either gained more deities or remained the same, but they have not reduced deities (Ronald Youngblood, B.D., Ph.D., as cited in *Evidence for Christianity*, p. 506). So, to assume that this monotheistic faith must have come from an evolutionary cause or a polytheistic religion isn't based on evidence, but rather a presumption of a false cause.

"Every fresh publication of Canaanite mythological texts makes the gulf between the religions of Canaan

and Israel increasingly clear. A common geographical environment, a common material culture and a common language were not enough to quench the glowing spark of the Israelite faith" (William F. Albright, as cited in *Evidence for Christianity*, p. 507). Unless it was divinely inspired, this faith should not have evolved or survived. If it did survive by mere chance, then the beliefs of Abraham and Moses were truly superior to those around them, simply because their beliefs were far greater than what man could have grasped in their time according to the narrative of evolution.

Psychology and altruism

In 2019, the British Broadcasting Company published an article titled, "How and Why Did Religion Evolve?" by Brandon Ambrosino. In his investigation of human and animal behaviors, namely the chimpanzee, he came to the evolutionary psychology's worldview of religion. That is, assuming religion must have a naturalistic cause, primitive humans must have come to their beliefs in god(s) and faith as it was positively reinforced by a pseudo altruism of sharing outside their immediate groups, ritualistic play and spreading their ideas over a meal with others.

As a result, "evolution didn't 'aim' at religion; religion just emerged as evolution aimed at other things" such as survival (Ambrosino). It was merely perpetuated by chance, humanity's imaginations and genetic codes. To some who hold this worldview, religion is like an unnecessary organ—the appendix of human existence that once must have had a purpose, but no longer has a necessary function for humanity's survival and wellbeing. However, these ideas are all based on anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions—not archaeological or historical evidence.

Furthermore, if evolution caused humanity to believe an illusion about reality by producing faith in God, how can we trust that it hasn't convoluted our minds to believe in scientism's predisposition of evolution? If evolution is based on survival, then it really isn't a reliable method of understanding what is true in reality. It only helps us figure out what we can get from the world around us in order to survive. So, "it is not really fair to apply the knife of evolutionary skepticism to our morality and religion, and not use it on our own [anti-supernaturalistic sense of] reason" (Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God*, p. 225).

Finally, if religion is purely a byproduct of evolution, how could a religion such as Christianity have survived when it demands that its followers need to love and care for the needs of their enemies? This would ensure the survival of both the weakest and the strongest—which is the very antithesis of evolutionary principles.

Although faith in a divine being is often met with skepticism or derision from those who hold an evolutionary worldview, faith in the God of the Bible is not baseless or illegitimate belief structure. This faith—from its Hebrew and Christian roots—has survived throughout human history, despite popular world trends and evolution's pattern for religion. Additionally, if belief in the Divine has ensured humanity's survival, as evolution presupposes, then it is truly the ultimate tool for life. For no one said it better than Jesus Christ Himself, "I Am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Ambrosino, Brandon. "How and Why Did Religion Evolve?" BBC Future, BBC, 18 Apr. 2019, www.bbc.com/future/article/20190418-how-and-why-did-religion-evolve.

McDowell, Josh. *Evidence for Christianity*. Thomas Nelson, 2006. GN

Beware the Invisible Power

There is an unseen power at work right now! A hidden enemy that can injure and destroy is in our midst. What is this concealed influence and most importantly, what can we do about it?

By John LaBissoniere

As we prepare to observe God's Passover and His Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, we should be especially wary of an invisible power that seeks to bend our will and destroy our character. Its pull can be so intense and tempting that, if we are not extremely careful, we could find it nearly impossible to resist. Every person who has ever lived, including our Savior, Jesus Christ, has felt this enemy's enormous might.

What is this force? *It's the power of temptation!*

The Bible cautions us to "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin" (1 Corinthians 15:34). In our battle to overcome sin we need to know what the scriptures say about temptation. We should understand how temptation works and most importantly, how to effectively resist this subtle and dangerous influence.

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ vigorously warned His disciples to, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Jesus fully comprehended the subtleties and powers of temptation and the vulnerability of human beings.

What is temptation? It is an appeal to the fleshly mind to think or act contrary to God's laws. It is a force of enticement which pulls us in the opposite direction of godly righteousness. While temptation is not sin, it is often its precursor.

How does temptation work? The attraction of a magnet to a piece of steel provides a prime example. When the two items are brought very close they practically jump together. Invisible yet powerful lines of force reach out from the magnet to attract the steel. In fact, the pull of the magnet on the metal increases significantly as the two objects are brought nearer to each other.

The parallel between the pull of magnetism and the pull of temptation is unmistakable. The *closer* we allow ourselves to get to sinful conduct, the *stronger* is temptation's attraction. On the other hand, the *farther away* we get from sinful behavior, the *weaker* is the appeal of temptation. We can use this analogy to our advantage in our combat against sin.

Buying into Satan's lies

The classic case of temptation is found in the initial book of the Bible. Eve, the first woman, was approached by a cunning serpent—Satan the devil—who sparked her interest with the false notion that she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1-6). Sadly, Eve "bought into" the devil's deceptive line. Satan succeeded in tempting her with a wrong desire

which led to sin. What the devil did to Eve, he is doing to all human beings!

Satan is described in Scripture as the "father of lies" (John 8:44). By engendering and promoting a squalid environment of deceit, lust, envy and jealousy, he has led countless individuals into the wretched grip of sin and death. As the "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), this disreputable spirit being is the underlying cause of all the pulls and inducements that influence human beings to disobey God.

Even though Satan performs his ignominious work, every person is accountable for the temptations to which he or she succumbs. The apostle James wrote, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by *his own desires* and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15, emphasis added throughout).

While people are not all tempted by the same things, each individual should stay far away from those which may tantalize them into sin. For example, this principle is expressed in a warning to young men about spurning the enticement of immoral women. "Stay away from her! Don't go near the door of her house" (Proverbs 5:8, New Living Translation). Furthermore, Proverbs 7:6-25 describes a young man who didn't resist such temptation and suffered profoundly as a result.

While maintaining physical distance from possible sinful conduct is important, it's not the only factor to consider. It's vital to realize that sin is often rooted in *the way we think*. Wrong physical actions are often the *consequence* of what has *already* been taking place in one's mind. For instance, Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has *already* committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). A man can certainly look at a woman, but going beyond that—to lust after her in his mind—is sinful.

How to replace wrong thinking

Therefore, what should we do to resist temptation? To put wrong thinking out of our minds, we need to put in God's way of righteous thinking. His perfect thoughts, made plain in the Bible (see Isaiah 55:8-9), can aid us immeasurably in steering clear of sinful temptations. As a result, we won't be deceived into believing that sin is pleasurable, but is in fact evil and therefore antithetical to what God would have us do.

Of course, we need to realize this is not an easy task. The apostle Paul discussed his own personal battle with temptation. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:18-20).

The Scriptures tell us about others who fell victim to temptation. For example, Samson failed to resist Delilah's enticement (Judges 16:4-21), and King David became so obsessed with his illicit desire for Bathsheba that he committed both adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11:1-27). Conversely, the patriarch Joseph fully resisted the temptation posed by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:1-12). How was he able to accomplish this when others have failed in similar instances? It involved the very principal Jesus spoke about in Matthew 26:41 to "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Joseph understood how vulnerable he was to temptation and as a result, stayed close to God in fervent prayer. This is a *critical key* in fighting temptation. Forgetting just how weak we really are is a serious mistake because it can lead us to lower our spiritual defenses



Staying close to God in fervent prayer is a critical key in fighting temptation.

and get dangerously close to situations that could harm or even destroy us.

Indeed, if we begin to think we have somehow become immune to temptation, we are playing a dangerous game (Proverbs 20:9; 1 John 1:8). Rather, we need to closely follow the example of Jesus who knew exactly how to stand up against sin. Paul stated, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, *yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15).

How Jesus withstood temptation

Jesus effectively withstood all of Satan's enticements as well as the pulls and tugs of society and His own flesh. In doing so He never forgot that His own human strength was *utterly insufficient* in the spiritual warfare He waged. He placed *all* reliance on His heavenly Father and plainly stated, "I can, of myself, do *nothing*" (John 5:30).

Since Jesus said this, it would be supremely unwise for you and me to think we have the strength to fight our spiritual battles alone. There is *no way* we can confront Satan's deviousness without God's help. We need to follow Christ's model when we face spiritual combat. What did He do? *He prayed continually* to His Heavenly Father and employed the power of His Holy Spirit, to prevail over every temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:6). He will fully aid us in doing the same. Paul said, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18, New International Version).

Christ can help us prevail over every temptation

Christ can help us prevail over every temptation before it leads to sin.

and expel every wrong thought before it leads to sin. In doing so, it helps us build holy, righteous character and gives us confidence in order to successfully deal with and overcome future temptations.

Finally, as we prepare to observe the Passover and Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, let's diligently examine ourselves to determine where we stand spiritually. It's imperative that we strive to put out sin and faithfully keep God's commandments. An intricate part of doing this is to strongly resist the pull of temptation. It's great to know that we *can* fight successfully against its magnetic pulls. With God's mighty help we will conquer the invisible power of temptation! GN



Guiomar Pacheco de Machicao

Dec. 17, 2020

Silvia Loomis, con't

Foraker on Dec. 11, where Silvia was remembered for her feisty spirit, sense of humor and the love she showed others. She will be greatly missed!

Guiomar Pacheco de Machicao

Guiomar Pacheco de Machicao died on Dec. 17, 2020, from longstanding complications due to shingles. She is survived by her husband, pastor Raúl Machicao. She faithfully served in Bolivia for more than 35 years and will be greatly missed. Mr. Machicao, an architect and engineer, built a separate building next to their home and later refurbished one floor as a large elegant hall where they have hosted the La Paz brethren for more than 30 years (and still do, although due to COVID-19, no in-person meetings are taking place now). We so look forward to seeing her again in God's Kingdom.

Sandra Lee Nelson

Sandra Lee (Thornton) Nelson, beloved mother, sister and grandmother, died peacefully at her home in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Jan. 11, 2021, at the age of 73. She was a mother of four "little women": Krisi, Amy, Becky and Julie; sister to Gwyn Lenhart, Clay Thornton and Bethany Dalton-Kash; grandmother to six grandchildren, Alex, Summer and Sven Skinner; Joshua and Makenna Orr and Abby Koch; and aunt to Tracy Bulharowski, Trent Thornton, Danielle Lenhart and David Lenhart.

She was born in Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania, to Hazel Painter (died 2015) and Richard Thornton (died 1986), and spent her childhood and teenage years in Irwin, Pennsylvania. She attended Ambassador College in



Sandra Lee Nelson

July 5, 1947-Jan. 11, 2021

Pasadena, California, and especially enjoyed her three years in Bricket Wood, England, as part of the Ambassador overseas student program. She raised her children in southern California and enjoyed a successful career in real estate for many years. She moved to Ohio in 2003 to be near her beloved mother Hazel Painter Thornton and two of her siblings.

Sandy loved God, the Bible, entertaining, travel, bridge, reading, nature and lifelong learning. She was a loving mother known for her hospitality, service to others and sweet thoughtfulness. Her emphasis was to live a life based on God's Word to lay a foundation for eternal life. She will be greatly missed. A small funeral with family and friends was held at Mt. Moriah cemetery.

Ron Pflueger

Ron, our beloved little brother whom we cherished and loved very much, died on Jan. 9, 2021. There's an emptiness in our family and home that can never be filled by anyone except our little brother, Ron.

Ron was limited and restricted in just about every way he lived. Ron wanted to live and do what everyone else could, but his mental ability only let him go so far. He would strive so hard to be like everyone else.

When Ron started school, he didn't go on to the second grade like everyone else. He stayed in the first grade again. The third year was the same. His teacher got in touch with our mom and dad and told them that Ron needed to be in a special school for people like him. They started him in a little school in Kennett, Missouri, where he met boys and girls who were special like he was. My parents were leery about how he was going to be



Ron Pflueger

May 29, 1961-Jan. 9, 2021

treated. However, they went with him for a while and were pleased at how Ron was treated.

Ron loved that little school. We talked to him about what he did and the people he met. He always talked about his teacher, Mr. Bennett, and a girl, Susie, he met on his little yellow bus. Ron would always say "Susie's my friend and Mr. Bennett is my friend." He loved them very much. That little school closed down a few years after he had started, but Ron loved that school and never forgot his two friends.

From then on, Ron was confined to home with his parents. Most of his life, Ron wanted to go places but he could never leave by himself. Ron would sometimes get frustrated because to him, it was like he was chained up and had bonds that he just couldn't break loose. The older he got, the more he felt he was being rejected because he couldn't go everywhere.

He often wished he could go anyplace, just like anyone else. He asked me [his brother] once with tears in his eyes why he couldn't do things. It was so heartbreaking to try to explain to him.

But we know that God was working a great purpose in Ron for a reason that only He knew. We prayed many times for God to heal him and make him like everybody else. We had ministers pray over him and ask God to heal him. But God never did.

How many of us could walk in Ron's shoes for a month, a week or even one day? Ron walked in those shoes for 59 years, seven months and nine days. Who would ever want to change shoes with him? Nobody. How many times would he have loved to change shoes with somebody else?



Earl Roemer

Sept. 5, 1944-Dec. 22, 2020

Many times, we shed many tears for him. It was like a river of tears that kept getting deeper. But we kept telling him that someday everything is going to be okay.

Ron never gave up. Ron never said "I've had it." Ron never said "I don't want to live anymore." He kept going. He never gave up and he just kept walking in those shoes that were on his feet for life—for 59 years, seven months and nine days.

So, when we see someone like Ron or in worse shape than Ron, have compassion and be merciful to them because the shoes they have on may be on for life, like Ron.

We know that when our little brother Ron is resurrected, we will know that our Father in heaven heard our many prayers. Ron will be healed, with a brand new body and a brand new pair of shoes—never again will he suffer from this world.

We know Ron would want all of us to keep going too—no matter how hard it gets. Anytime we think we really have it bad, all we have to do is think about our little brother Ron—about what he suffered and went through. Ron was our shining light, reminding us to never quit and to endure until the very end.

God worked a great purpose in Ron's life and we will miss him so much. He will be in our hearts forever. We thank our Father in heaven for our beloved little brother, Ron.

Earl Louis Roemer

Earl Louis Roemer died unexpectedly on Dec. 22, 2020, in Soldotna, Alaska. We say unexpectedly, because with the life he packed into his 76 years, we would have predicted he'd go out in a fiery plane crash, or expire from hypothermia stuck in a snow drift in the middle of no-

where. He is preceded in death by his cherished wife of 46 years, Carol. Carol would often say he was accident-prone, but Earl would parry that he just "did a lot of things," so the law of averages was in effect when he'd injure himself occasionally and spectacularly. Besides serving as a life-long minister, he was a mechanic, welder, pilot, ham radio operator, hunter, fisher, bee-keeper, hydroponic gardener, storyteller, author and cook. Earl was like a larger-than-life character pulled from a classic American novel: equal parts dreamer and doer.

Earl was born in Lordsburg, New Mexico, on Sept. 5, 1944, and spent his early years in the high desert of Raton and Red River, New Mexico. The son of Charlie, a cowboy turned mechanic, and Marie, a school teacher, he learned early on the meaning of a life of service from his humble beginnings. He spoke of how his family home was marked along the hobo line as a place to get food. Before Earl was born, Marie heard Mr. Armstrong's radio program and was called to begin reading the Bible and asking questions that her Catholic priest couldn't answer. It took several years before her husband Charlie was on board, but he too came to faithfully follow God's word. They moved the family to Pasadena, California, in 1957, where Charlie served as a mechanic for the ministry's fleet, and the Roemer kids attended Imperial Schools.

For Earl's senior year final exams at Imperial, in order to graduate his typing class, he had to type up an application to Ambassador College. It was submitted, he was accepted, and his path was set. Any reluctance up to that point was forgotten in what became a calling. Earl attended Ambassador and was set up on a date with Carol Springer their junior year by her boss, Dr. Torrance. They married a few days after graduation on June 6, 1966. The newlyweds left the next day, honeymooning while driving to their first assignment as a ministerial trainee and wife.

Earl and Carol had the honor of serving brethren in Greensboro and Fayetteville, North Carolina (1966-67); Akron, Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio (1968-70); Cape Girardeau and Poplar Bluff, Missouri, Pa-

Please see next page



Rex L. Spears

Aug. 10, 1938-Jan. 18, 2021

Earl Roemer, con't

Paducah, Kentucky and Evansville, Indiana (1970-76); Alaska and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory (1977-1987); Tulsa, Oklahoma (1987-1993); Hawaii and the Philippines (1993-2002); Boise and Lewiston, Idaho, Baker City, Oregon, Missoula, Kalispell, Great Falls, Helena and Billings, Montana (2002-2007). In 2007, Earl and Carol returned to Alaska ostensibly for their last assignment before retirement, continuing to serve brethren in Alaska, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

Besides his wife, Earl is preceded in death by his son Tony, parents Charlie and Marie, brother Brian, and sister and brother-in-law, Janice and Roger Foster. He is survived by his brother Charles and Charles' wife Janice; sister-in-law Anne-liese; many nephews and nieces in the Roemer and Foster tribes; his children Deborah and David Bensinger; Thad and Kim (Hemsley), and Christina Nell and Jon Held. He delighted in each of his exceptional grandchildren, Noam and Sage Bensinger; Nate, Emilia and Karissa Roemer and Astrid and Georgia Held.

Earl leaves a legacy with those who knew him: don't get excited, bear long, suffer long and help out the people around you who need it. Friends and coworkers shared comments and memories with Mr. Roemer.

Aaron Dean: "Earl Roemer was indeed a unique person . . . We traveled to Philippines together a couple times where we flew to the various churches. He worked hard even though it was difficult for him with joint issues . . . He was generous to a fault and often brought frozen wild Alaskan salmon to those he visited. He will be missed by those he served."

Mark Welch: "Earl was the first pastor I worked under as a newly hired employee in 1989 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I learned a lot from Earl, but what stands out most to me was his care for the widows, poor, needy and sick.

" . . . I believe both Earl and Carol helped Barbara and me get off to a good start in the ministry. We are truly grateful to have known them both and long to see them in God's Kingdom at the glorious return of Jesus Christ!"

UCG members in Hong Kong: "We are deeply grateful for his love and support towards the little flock of God's in Hong Kong . . . Words cannot express what he means to the brethren in Hong Kong. His message of love, kindness and hope remains in our lives long after his own."

Terri Ko: "Long before Earl was officially appointed senior pastor to our tiny Hong Kong congregation, he had already been visiting our region, encouraging and inspiring brethren here to remain faithful to God. It was through his relentless support and efforts that Hong Kong was put on the map as a Feast site and formally became registered as a local UCG (Hong Kong) in March 2016. Earl has left us a lasting example of what it means to be a true servant of God."

John Elliott: "The Roemers were a pioneer family in the early days of the Church. They came to serve at headquarters in Pasadena in the mid-1950's. Their son, Earl, was smart and had a can-do mindset that he inherited from his dad. Earl went on to obtain certificates in the sectors of theology, transportation, communication and aviation. He utilized those in various interests while serving as a pastor and senior pastor. Others of us pursued some similar interests, but Earl's were always on a different scale. I had a CB radio license, but Earl's Amateur Radio privileges included a national security clearance all the way up to NORAD at the Cheyenne Mountain complex. I was a private airplane pilot; Earl was a helicopter and airplane pilot with restoration and design abilities.

"Some years ago Earl, Carol and Merrie and I hit it off and developed a strong friendship. Carol and Merrie loved the outdoors and we made forays into Alaskan wildernesses. Earl and I also regularly conferred on our international senior pastor assignments. And he always had

a bigger than life project he was working on. One was to design and build a helicopter powered by one of two turbine engine APU's sitting in his garage. I considered using the other to power a motor boat with a jet whine. Sadly, neither engine ever got used.

"At the very time that Earl and I were scheduled for a winter drive from Alaska to Idaho, he succumbed to a brain bleed. Our last phone call was a discussion about the incredible opportunity God is offering members to be firstfruits with Christ in His Kingdom. While many around the world temporarily lost a faithful, stubborn, generous and resolute pastor, father and friend, we all rejoice in the opportunity of eternal life together in the Kingdom of God."

Bob Dick: "I have known and been friends with Earl since our families arrived in Pasadena in the summer of 1957. We enjoyed our high school years together and then college and ministry took our lives to different parts of the country, even different parts of the world.

" . . . Earl cared for people in the Philippines, Hong Kong and in the last years other areas of Southeast Asia. He was faithful, dedicated and energetic in his care for the members in these areas.

"On the home front, Earl was a renaissance man—he could do a bit of everything—mechanic, fixed wing and helicopter pilot, cook, hunter, fisherman, author and on it goes. He was very generous with his time and money, giving of both, and was loved by those who knew him well. He will be missed."

Victor Kubik: "In 1974 I started working for Earl Roemer as associate pastor in the Paducah, Kentucky, and Cape Girardeau, Missouri, congregations. Not only did I learn lessons about dedicated, selfless service from him, I also became a ham radio operator. He was WB9IND and I was WA4NJJ. Earl went on to service in other areas including Alaska and Hawaii where I felt privileged to visit him. He always treated my wife and me with the greatest respect and generosity. Earl was known for helping people who were economically challenged. He also stood by and championed people who were mistreated and abused. He had many talents in building and vocational skills and put them to use in serving the Church. He loved

his children and always spoke so affectionately of them.

"A high point in our friendship was three visits we made to the Philippines and two to Hong Kong. Earl loved to be around lots of people. They loved him because he was so genuine.

"Earl has left an eternal mark in my life. He was a mentor, a friend and brother who gave his life for the people that God had given him to serve."

Rex L. Spears

From the Bible we read a question posed by Job: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" Rex Lamoyne Spears knew the answer to that question; he lived the answer, and as Job noted, he also waits " . . . till my change comes." Rex Spears began his wait on Jan. 18, 2021.

Rex Spears started life in Savannah, Oklahoma, on Aug. 10, 1938. Born to Ray and Margaret Buff Spears, Rex grew up in Bisbee, Arizona, five miles from the Mexican border. Mr. Spears wasn't sports-minded as a youth; he was an academic. He loved to read and study, keeping up with current events and history in the making. Numbers came very easily to him. His parents operated a gas station in Bisbee, which Rex worked at right alongside his dad until he went off to college. He was the first in his family to go to college, graduating from the University of Arizona in 1961 with a bachelor of arts degree in accounting. Del Monte Foods recruited him right out of college to work in their San Francisco headquarters, first as an auditor and then as a financial analyst. Mr. Spears accepted their offer and remained in their employ until his retirement 43 years later.

While Mr. Spears found a home with Del Monte Foods, he also found a life-long treasure: Rita McDonald. Rex and Rita married in 1964 and have shared their love for one another; for God's Word and work; for their three children (Rona, Ramen and Andrea) and four grandchildren; and for the brethren spanning 56 years. Mr. Spears loved being a grandfather, hearing and sharing one-line jokes from his young grandchildren. He was also a loveable grandfather to children in the Church, and to anyone younger. Together, he and Rita enjoyed traveling, visiting 15 countries, most of which were during the Feast of Tabernacles. Mr. Spears especially enjoyed the talents of others, whether in writing, music or

on the stage. He was a man who appreciated others.

Being called into the Body of Christ is a miracle. The calling of husband and wife together seems extra special. Rex and Rita Spears were called together in 1967 after hearing *The World Tomorrow* broadcast by Herbert Armstrong. They grabbed hold of this "new," clear teaching and began the journey of a lifetime. God's Word permeated everything in their life; religion wasn't just what you did or said, it was what you thought and became.

Mr. Spears was faithful, dedicated and focused. He had an overarching goal in life: to teach, preach and be an example of the truth of God. To him, service was a way of life, giving freely of his time and energy, he served the brethren in the San Francisco Bay area for more than five decades. Mr. Spears first served as a deacon, then in 1993 he was ordained an elder.

Mr. Spears had a way of speaking that compelled one to listen. People not only recall his messages for clarity of content, but for his basso, radio-quality voice that carried the message.

Mr. Spears was not a respecter of persons, sharing the truth in a natural, matter-of-fact manner. One member said, "He'd hit you with the unvarnished truth, but with love." Another member noted, "Mr. Spears had the ability to shake up my unsettled thinking . . . helping me focus on what was important—keep things in perspective." Another added that, "Mr. Spears was " . . . like a father, ready to give his wisdom anytime." Mr. Spears impacted many people; "Mr. Spears was a man who reminded us, in his sermons, how serious God's Word is and why we are to keep our relationship to God first." One elder stated, "It was an honor serving with Rex. He was firmly founded in the Word. You could always go to him for encouragement, guidance and counsel. He was family. He was a friend. He was a faithful servant of God."

As Mr. Spears' health began to falter, he expressed his appreciation for the time God allowed him to serve, and a little frustration for all that is yet to be done. For those who knew Rex Spears, they saw faith in action, belief in tomorrow and an expectation that the promises of God will be fulfilled. To those who wondered or speculated about the world tomorrow, Mr. Spears would simply say, "Be there and find out!" UN



Diane Bailey faithfully served the Church and God's people as an administrative assistant for more than 41 years.

Diane Bailey worked for the Church of God for more than 41 years and during that time she contributed greatly to the work of the Church as well as to the lives of those around her.

Diane worked for the Ambassador Foundation at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, California, from the late 1970s until 1995—when the performing arts events there were discontinued. Diane worked directly for the Auditorium Manager (first Kevin Gardner and then Peter Eddington) as an administrative assistant—doing scheduling, staff payroll, wardrobe, special events, receptions, typing and more.

Peter Eddington recalls wonderful memories of Diane. From the early days of their friendship and working together in Pasadena, Diane was a regular visitor to Peter and Terri's home, often babysitting their three sons. Everyone loved Diane; her stellar attitude was hard to fault. She set a wonderful example as a virtuous, Christian woman. No one had a bad word to say about her. Mr. Eddington writes: "We will greatly miss Diane and her smiling face at the home office. Her loyal friendship to me and our family for 40 years was so much appreciated. We look forward to seeing her at the resurrection of the Saints!"



Diane had a great sense of humor! Terri Eddington recalled a time when they were working together at the auditorium. Diane was known for drinking a lot of water. So, some of the guys filled the water cooler up with fish. When she went back to get water, she was in for a big surprise! She took it coolly and calmly with a great attitude.

Diane later worked for the United Church of God, an *International Association*, from 1995 until 2020, as an administrative assistant for the Church president (six of them, most recently Victor Kubik) and for Church legal counsel, Larry Darden.

Victor Kubik, who worked with Diane for more than 10 years, shares the following: "Diane was an unassuming, unpretentious person who professionally handled so much of the president's office communica-

tions. She was a faithful servant; a deeply converted and caring person who befriended many who needed encouragement. We shared many challenging and even humorous moments together that I will miss. Diane had outlived different administrations but never spoke of anyone with harsh, judgmental words. She was a beautiful example of a person who seemed natural in ways so many of us have to work at."

Larry Darden reflects: "Diane was a hard worker and always promptly carried through on any task that I, or her other 'boss,' assigned. I don't recall that she was ever cross with me or anyone else in all those years. She will be missed."

Her co-workers and friends will remember Diane as the glue that helped keep the home office running. She nurtured and valued relationships. She was known



for being kind and loving, taking an interest in people's children, asking about their pets (she loved her dog Baxter) or remembering the various health trials others were going through in the midst of her own. She showed her care and concern in the small ways—always keeping the hot sauce stocked in the kitchen area, and making sure we never ran out of coffee and tea. Natasha Teague remembers her dear friend: "She was a sweet woman, always looking out for others and focusing on them rather than herself."

On Tuesday morning at 6:07 a.m., Dec. 8, Diane Bailey fell asleep until the Resurrection. Her brothers, David and Danny, were by her side when she took her last breath. Diane's was a life well lived and precious to God and to all who knew and worked with her.

Lisa Fenchel

Retirement of Clay Thornton, UCG Senior Video Producer



Clay Thornton retired from fulltime employ of the Church on Jan. 1, 2021, after 32 years of service.

When reflecting on his years employed by the Church, Clay shared the following:

Having served in the Church from 1969 to 1976 and from 1980 to 1995, it was a dream come true to be asked to join the media team once again in 2003. I spent the first two years focused primarily on the Sermon Disk Program, camp vid-

eos, audio/visual support for the General Conference of Elders, an Ambassador Bible College video, Feast of Tabernacles videos which included international travel, video graphics and special assignment productions as needs arose. In 2005, I was very excited when our Church administration proposed and the Council of Elders approved a weekly TV program with three presenters, eventually naming it *Beyond Today*. The *Beyond Today* program consumed most of my media time until I retired.

Another blessing for our Church and for me personally has been to have other employees added over the years to help support the growing needs of video and graphic productions. We worked well together, each contributing his unique talents, background and broad experience. I considered this close relationship with my fellow employees more like family than

coworkers. I've always considered it a great blessing to have a job that connects so deeply with my core beliefs and spiritual passions.

The media team, who worked closely with Clay, shared some comments:

Clint Porter: "How do you win multiple Emmys? I've met many people who presented themselves as video experts, but whose work was frankly mediocre and stagnant. Clay is strikingly different. He taught me to view the world with child-like curiosity. He never decided he knows it all, so he never stops learning."

Rudy Rangel: "I have always appreciated Clay's perspective. He helped shape us as video professionals, and he did it with gentleness and encouragement. He was very dutiful—if he had a deadline, he was pounding away. He had a strong work ethic. I am so glad we got to work together

in our open workspace and that I really got to know him. I am grateful to have spent the last 11 years working with Clay. It was truly a blessing."

Jamie Schreiber: "We filmed many Bible reenactments in the early years and he was always very encouraging of my work. I tended to show Clay early cuts of the UCG short films because he always gave an honest opinion on what was working and what wasn't. It's been a pleasure serving beside him these last 12 years."

Media and Communications Services Operation Manager Peter Eddington recalls making the first phone calls to encourage Clay to move to Cincinnati to fill the role of Senior Video Producer and Editor at the Church's home office. "It was a big move for the Thorntons, and we were so thrilled when Clay agreed to accept the position and relocate from Southern California to

Ohio. He is a very accomplished, Emmy-award winning video editor and producer. Clay brought his skills to bear in hundreds of our video productions for his 18 years with us in Cincinnati. He left big shoes for our other video editors to fill, and he will be greatly missed around the office. But we are thankful he and Stephana will still be in the area, and wish them all the best as Clay transitions into his retirement years."

Looking ahead, Clay shared: "During retirement, my wife Stephana and I look forward to spending time with friends and family, and limited travel. Personally, I desire to spend more time practicing guitar, learning piano, reading and painting—primarily in oil and watercolor. I always enjoyed the freedom of exploring new things in my youth and see my retirement years continuing the adventure."

Lisa Fenchel

- March 7-13 **Forgive Us Our Debts**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Forgiveness Is Possible*
- March 14-20 **Nine Meals to Anarchy**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *You Can Have Living Faith*
- March 21-27 **The Jewish Temple and Bible Prophecy**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*
- March 28- April 3 **Easter: The Rest of the Story**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Easter: The Rest of the Story*
- April 4-10 **Easter, Idols and God**
Presented by Darris McNeely
Literature offered: *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*
- April 11-17 **The Irrelevant Commandments**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The Ten Commandments*
- April 18-24 **Is Jesus the Only Way?**
Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*
- April 25- May 1 **Eat Clean!**
Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*



Periodicals Postage Paid
at Milford, Ohio, and at
additional mailing offices

BY THE NUMBERS

9,878

Average number of *Beyond Today* ads
being run daily on Roku



Ambassador Bible College will operate live, in-person classes next year and is eagerly accepting applications! If you are interested in spending an academic year studying God's Word with like-minded Church members, please consider attending. You can learn about the program by visiting abc.ucg.org. You can also direct questions to Director of Admissions, Frank Dunkle by emailing him at Frank_Dunkle@ucg.org.

Gifts of Stock and Mutual Funds

In mid-February, stock index reached a record high. Those with stock, bond and mutual fund accounts may be seeing values never seen. This is good, but when you go to cash them in you are creating a taxable event that can cost you a generous amount in tax.

However, by making a gift of publicly traded stock, bonds or mutual fund shared directly from a taxable investment account, a donor is allowed a charitable income tax deduction based the current market value of the security. The donor can avoid the capital gains tax that otherwise would be due by donating the shares directly. This provides the largest tax deduction to the donor and a larger gift to the Church or other charitable organization.

Below in this example we assume the donor wants to donate \$25,000 worth of appreciated securities to the Church. The donor files taxes as a single and is in the 32 percent income tax bracket. They pay a 20 percent rate for the capital gains tax. The donor only paid \$5,000 for the investment and it now has a \$20,000 reportable profit (capital gain) when it sells. (In most situations, the cost basis of an asset is its cost to you.)

In this example, donating the security directly results in no capital gains tax being paid, a larger itemized deduction and a larger gift to the Church	Sell Security and Donate the Net Cash	Donate Security Directly
Current Fair Market Value of Security	100 shares × \$250 per share with a cost basis of \$50 per share—\$25,000	100 shares × \$250 per share with a cost basis of \$50 per share—\$25,000
Capital Gain Tax (Long Term) Due	\$20,000 gain @ 20% = \$4,000	\$0
Amount Gifted to Church	\$21,000	\$25,000
Charitable Tax Deduction (32% × \$21,000)	\$6,720	\$8,000
Total Tax Deduction	Charitable tax deduction (-) Capital Gain Tax Due = \$2,720 \$8,000	\$8,000

The maximum capital gains rates run between 25 percent and 33 percent depending on which state a donor lives in.

Some people have stock that was given to them from former employers, or a life insurance company that made some corporate changes. These businesses provided people with a small number of stock shares. These shares may be valued at a few hundred dollars to few thousand. For many these are the only single name issued stocks they own. Shares of stock like this can make a perfect gift. On the other hand, inheriting such stock is often a messy process.

Some people have stock or mutual fund accounts that have done well. Often these growth assets become a large portion of a portfolio, but never get exchanged to something else more suitable because of the high tax liability. Instead of making gifts of cash, the gifting of appreciated growth investments makes sense because it may reduce risk in your portfolio while also providing a potential tax deduction.

When you have stocks that are worth less than you paid for them it is wiser to sell them first and claim a capital loss.

The Church accepts donations of publicly traded stock, bonds or mutual fund shares. If you are considering this type of donation, please contact our Planned Giving Coordinator, Howard Marchbanks at (513) 570-2343, or plannedgiving@ucg.org. He can answer questions and provide you the name of the Church's brokerage firm to execute the gift transfer. **UN**