



United Church of God an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

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Personal From the President...

As we approach the Feast of Pentecost that focuses on the founding of the New Testament Church, I want to share some notable accounts from our churches who have furthered the gospel locally in their community. A few weeks ago, we featured the story about the establishment of a Bible study in Berlin, Ohio, that spun off from a quickly arranged Feast site last autumn. Feast services were held in a large tent in a hotel parking lot. We invited people from the public to come join us. Many came. After the Feast, a significant number of them wanted to continue meeting regularly and those weekly meetings have been sustained through the Spring Holy Days.

Now I'd like to turn attention to new congregations formed in eastern Zambia in Africa. God has used one of our newer pastors, Filius Jere, and his wife Chosiwe, to raise up churches in three areas.

This involved preaching on the radio, and holding Bible studies and church services. It also involved seminars and lectures on conservation farming and entrepreneurship with focus on women. This is a very poor area and we have helped the community with food security, water, livestock and homes. Since 2018, the brethren have built two church buildings and are working on a third one now.



Combined women's choir singing special music at the new Madzimawe hall for Spring Holy Day Services.

Filius and Chosiwe Jere came to the Pastoral Development Program in Cincinnati in 2018. For years, Filius has worked as a broadcast journalist and had been sent on assignments to Europe. In Eastern Zambia, he has produced a regular radio program about farming and his voice is widely-known in the region. He has used this familiarity to do a "Zambianized" version of

Beyond Today. He has taken the content of some of the current *BT* programs by our three presenters and added an introduction, summary and contact information. In the last few years, he has baptized more than 50 people; more than 150 people meet regularly now. Before the Passover this year, he baptized 28 people whom he counseled for a period of two years using a systematic plan of going through the United Church of God Bible Study Course, followed by three counseling sessions.

Filius has also held classes for leaders of our other congregations in Zambia about how to use radio.

Please read a more detailed account of God's Work in Eastern Zambia that includes many photos at <https://kubik.org/genesis-and-growth-of-the-united-church-of-god-in-eastern-zambia/>

***Beyond Today* Television**

Yesterday we recorded two new *Beyond Today* television programs with Steve Myers and Darris McNeely. The titles were "Why Were You Born?" by Steve Myers and "How Do You Know God Exists?" by Darris McNeely.

Focus Meeting

At Monday morning's home office focus meeting, Lena VanAusdle, who coordinates the Good Works program, gave a report about how it functions, who is helped by it, and how grants are given. An advisory board consisting of Rudy Rangel, Chelsea Meidinger, Sarah Bizic, Matt Hernandez and Lena VanAusdle consider all the submitted grant requests twice a year. The next deadline is May 31 for projects to take place between October 2021 and March 2022. You may want to see what Good Works does at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/outreach/good-works>

Letter from podcast listener

We received this note from a listener to our recent *Inside United* podcast about caring for your aging parents:

"Thank you so much for this podcast. I have listened to it twice today as I and my siblings are in the thick of caring for our 90-year-old disabled dad and 84-year-old mom with dementia. Just this week has been emotionally difficult for me due to their current health issues. The podcast encouraged me to know that we are doing many things right especially in regards to the paperwork and health preparedness. The advice on the dementia issues is very timely and helpful to me as well. Thank you again . . . very much. This gave me a lift when I really needed it!"

Seminars and Retreats

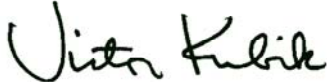
The Women's Services committee is in the process of planning their next online seminar for elder's wives. The seminar will take place in late May and the focus will be on Psalm 15.

We are slowly coming back to planning in-person events for our ministry to discuss matters of common interest and concern. In South Africa, a three-day retreat is planned at pastor Roy Demont's farm for all elders to discuss how to successfully weather the storms that lie ahead.

In the U.S., we are planning regional retreats for pastors to hear thoughts, suggestions and things learned about how to better serve our brethren and cope in this uncertain world.

I am continually thankful for the maturity and courage of the brethren and ministry in the United Church of God. Please pray for us and we will continue to pray for you.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

Personal from Ministerial and Member Services...

Dear Ministers and Brethren,

As We Approach Pentecost, Are You Walking in the Holy Spirit?

The question above has had a whole lot more meaning to me ever since I met Bob Neff back in 1990 when I was serving as an assistant pastor in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area. I have felt very blessed and privileged to have known Bob. He died many years ago, but he lived a whole lot longer than any of his doctors thought he would.

At around age 16, while Bob was swimming and diving, he injured his neck and spinal cord very badly—so badly he became a quadriplegic. Bob, as a teenager, took his last step. How tragic and devastating for one so young and vibrant!

Nevertheless, the human spirit is often very resilient and dynamic. Bob didn't give up on life as he did his best to make a very bad situation as palatable as possible. Bob didn't lie around always feeling sorry for himself—he accomplished much. In the course of time, Bob became a TV technician back when it was a viable profession. He also owned a local pool hall for a number of years and was well-known and well-liked in his community. Most everyone was inspired by their contact with Bob Neff.

A person can't help wondering how they would react under such dire circumstances.

And that brings me back to the question posed above, "As we approach Pentecost, are you walking in the Holy Spirit?" Bob had to give up walking physically, but more importantly from a spiritual perspective he learned to walk in the Spirit!

In the course of time, God called Bob to a knowledge of His awesome truth regarding salvation and eternal life in an amazing Kingdom where there would no longer be sorrow, pain, tears, or crying. The message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God resonated in Bob Neff as he, perhaps more than any of us, longed for a huge change in his life. Bob longed for the time when he would not only walk again, but for a time when he would no longer be restricted by anything physical.

Bob died in 1995 at the age of 58. It is quite remarkable—indeed miraculous—that someone

would live for 42 years as a quadriplegic. You may remember Christopher Reeve, who became a quadriplegic after being thrown from a horse. Previously, he had become famous for his acting role as Superman. He lived only nine years after his accident and died at the age of 52.

As a young minister, I was personally very inspired by my contact with Bob Neff. I truly believe that I benefitted most from our visits. Bob greatly appreciated our time together and in 1994-1995 we really had a lot to talk about regarding the truth and Scripture.

Bob, perhaps more than any other person besides my wife, taught me just how important it is to walk in the Spirit!

I will likely write more about “walking in the Spirit” in the next *eNews*. In the meantime, let us all strive to walk in the Spirit, by being more loving, more joyful, more peaceful, more willing to suffer long and be patient, more gentle, more good, more faithful, more meek and humble, and more self-controlled!

Wishing you all a very rewarding and inspiring Sabbath!

In God’s love and service,



Mark Welch, Operation Manager for MMS

Update on Camp Hye Sierra

I wanted to thank you all for your prayers on behalf of our southwest regional camp, and to let you know that God has heard your prayers and has graciously provided us with an alternate facility located a short distance outside of Prescott, Arizona, for camp in 2021 (<http://teenroundup.org>).

Camp this year will be operated in accordance with state and local mandates. Current Arizona mandates do not require masks or social distancing. This will enable us to responsibly provide the camp experience that UYC strives to create—an experience that would simply not be possible given the restrictions in the state of California this summer.

Our original dates for Hye Sierra were not available, which requires us to shift camp one week later—so camp will be held July 4–11, with staff arriving July 2. The airport in Phoenix is a short distance from many U.S. airports, and connecting flights to Prescott are available from Phoenix. Transportation to and from PHX or PRC will be provided

Get your applications in now! More information will be coming your way in the coming weeks. I cannot express to you how excited we are to have camp this summer. We will see YOU this summer in the mountains of central Arizona.

—Ben Light, director, Camp Hye Sierra

Inside United Podcast



Mark Welch—Plans for MMS

Mark Welch joins Victor Kubik to discuss his role as operation manager for Ministerial and Member Services at the United Church of God, and lay out his plans for the future.

<https://www.ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-199-mark-welch-plans-for-mms>

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

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

2021 Southeast Formal in Atlanta—“Vintage Hollywood”

The Atlanta and Buford, Georgia, congregations hosted the 2021 UCG Southeast Formal Weekend this year on April 3 and 4. With the dance taking place on a Saturday evening, all preparations for the weekend were completed well in advance. Attendees arrived in town on Friday afternoon eager to observe the double Sabbath. Like last year’s formal, the weekend drew young people from many states, including Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas.



Based on the unique meeting venue, we were able to host services and the dance at the same Atlanta location, yet in separate, well-sized rooms. On the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, we welcomed 191 brethren to services. The service included an offertory piece played by Jasmine Aust along with Dane Howard and Bryce Fogelson who each played guitar pieces, with vocals, for special music. Philip Aust then delivered a sermon entitled “What should you take from the Spring Feasts? Your Redemptive Arc.”



Once the sun set, Formal activities began with attendees welcomed to a Hollywood-themed, 1930s-1940s dance. Several wore time-period inspired formal wear. Decorations included an old film projector showing “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and “The Glenn Miller Story,” the smell of fresh popcorn from a nostalgic popcorn machine, interviews on the red carpet and parents taking pictures as paparazzi behind velvet ropes. The ballroom offered an inviting vintage-Hollywood feel with curtains on the sidewalls and a classic Hollywood sign at the front of the room. Given the theme, the music selection emphasized 1930s and 40s big band, along with songs that fit with current line dances. In addition to a sparkling cider toast in champagne flute glasses for our seniors, the group enjoyed a Chick-fil-A mid-dance delivery and a warm glazed donut late-evening delivery. This year we honored the following seniors with a formal toast: Daniel Cason, Lena Christensen, Nathan Dyer, Seth Hall, Rachel Jaeger, Olivia Kess, Jaela Martin, Devin Powell, Ambrose Schiphorst and Addison Talbott.



Following Saturday's events, the weekend concluded with an activity at Stars and Strikes in Stone Mountain. All total, 95 teens and family members enjoyed bowling and the video arcade on Sunday morning. And for those brave souls who had the time, 20 climbers finished the weekend with a hike up Stone Mountain, the most visited destination in Georgia.

Feedback to this year's event was overwhelmingly positive. Comments include:

"Dr. Aust and Atlanta Church, thank you for all your hard work and preparation for hosting this lovely weekend! It was a great time to be with brothers and sisters for the last Feast day and the dance that followed. These memories will stay with us! Thank you again!"

"Such a fun . . . weekend in Atlanta . . . at the Southeast Regional Formal Dance and Prom 2021. Special thanks goes out to Dr. Philip Aust, Sarah Aust, Jerry Shallenberger and the rest of the Atlanta and Buford, Georgia, brethren who made this a most memorable weekend for all."

"(We) had so much fun this weekend with all my family and friends. Definitely a 10/10 recommendation going to (the) Atlanta formal. Can't wait to do it again."

The Atlanta and Buford congregations thank those who attended this year's event and made it unforgettable.

—Philip and Sarah Aust

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