



United Church of God an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

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Personal From the President...

The Chinese Communist Party and the Gospel of the Kingdom

In early July, many newspapers and media carried the story as the lead or on the front page. The People's Republic of China, 1.4 billion people strong, was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, formed with help from Russian revolutionaries in 1921. Some 70,000 dignitaries, business leaders, Communist Party administrators and children assembled in Beijing's vast Tiananmen Square on July 1. I use the word "vast," because it is. I have been in China and Hong Kong a number of times since the early 1990s. I have walked the 109 acres of that square, overseen by the watchful eye of the "Great Helmsman," a massive portrait of the late Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong hanging atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace.

My trips certainly weren't the first for the Church of God. Herbert W. Armstrong visited the country during a unique period in 1979 and again in 1984, where he then met privately with several Chinese ambassador-rank ministers, but most importantly, Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping. Leading an undeveloped country with over a billion people living in poverty, Deng created a unique open time of reform for China, a temporary door through which Herbert Armstrong walked. He was one of the first non-political westerners allowed to enter the country to officially meet with Chinese leaders.

As I read the current coverage and saw photos of China's strongman leader Xi Jinping, standing over the portrait of Mao and wearing a traditional grey "Mao suit"—delivering strident and threatening comments about the West—I reflected both on my trips to this massively populated country and those of Mr. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong was then accompanied by Aaron Dean, today an elder serving on the Council of Elders of the United Church of God. An earlier Council sent me and others to China in 2000 to explore whether any of the ties and projects of the Ambassador Foundation in the 1980s could be renewed, particularly educational and humanitarian projects associated with the Soong Ching-ling Foundation.



Nancy Reagan and the Little Ambassadors from Shanghai with Herbert Armstrong, and Aaron and Michelle Dean.

The Soong Ching-ling Foundation was named for the widow of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the man revered as the ancestral leader of modern China. The Ambassador Foundation donated educational supplies and funding to the then-emerging Chinese Department of Education in 1979, which was still recovering from the disastrous Cultural Revolution that nearly destroyed the country. That set the stage for later projects. According to Mr. Dean, it was through an exchange relationship between the Soong Ching-ling Foundation and the Ambassador Foundation that arrangements were made to bring a children's performance group, the Little Ambassadors of Shanghai, to America. That group would perform under the auspices of the Ambassador Foundation across the United States, ending up at the White House with First Lady Nancy Reagan (which presentation was attended in person by Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Dean) and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

During his 1979 visit, Mr. Armstrong met with a leading government minister of education, Vice Chairman Tan Zhenlin, a contemporary of Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai. A banquet in Mr. Armstrong's honor was conducted that included more than 60 ambassadors and foreign dignitaries. When he returned in 1984, he met the man whom the Chinese then called the "Paramount Leader." The meeting with Deng Xiaoping, attended by Mr. Dean and Ellis and Gwen La Ravia (a former UCG minister and his wife, now both deceased), was cordial and frank. Mr. Armstrong told the Chinese Premier that human governments would not solve the world's problems. Mr. Armstrong later wrote: "Deng Xiaoping admitted to me that China has made some serious mistakes."



Deng Xiaoping meets with Herbert Armstrong and Aaron Dean in 1984.

Following Mr. Armstrong's death, ties with the Soong Ching-ling Foundation eroded and faded. During the summer of 1999, the United Church of God received word from China that there might be some interest in renewing these relationships. During a retreat of the Council of Elders in Seattle, discussions took place, and it was decided to explore some possible new educational ties through LifeNets and the United Church of God youth programs. During my subsequent visit to China, we had a number of cordial meetings with Soong Ching-ling officials, but unfortunately, despite some initial promise and first steps, no lasting possibilities emerged.

I had first been to China in 1993, and it seemed then that bicycles ruled the country. They were everywhere! Not so in 2000 when I returned. Fast-moving cars dominated and seemingly hundreds of skyscrapers were under construction. The high-tech pace had only picked up when I returned with Earl Roemer in 2016, and then again to Hong Kong with Darris McNeely and our wives where a Kingdom of God seminar was conducted.

Dr. Graham Allison, a renowned China analyst, wrote that "the world has never seen anything like the rapid, tectonic shift in the global balance of power created by the rise of China." I believe it. I have seen it firsthand.

Today China is dramatically different. Although China's economy has grown to rival that of the United States, its former democratic reforms have died. Cai Xia, a former high-ranking Party official, wrote that the current regime is "bent on holding on to power through brutality and ruthlessness." Many increasingly worry that China is preparing to invade Taiwan, home of the largest semiconductor factory on the planet. Even Japan recently joined the ranks of those openly decrying a possible invasion and the economic and political turmoil it would bring.

When I saw the media coverage of the 100th anniversary, I wondered where the now-grown children from Shanghai who visited Ambassador now lived. While he was on his 1984 visit to China, Mr. Armstrong talked openly and at length about the hope of children to build a better world and how peace would come. He spoke about how important education was, particularly in learning the way to peace. His words were broadcast widely on China television and later throughout the United States. Now, 37 years later, I wonder what those now-adult Chinese think of their country and the state of the world.

In contrast today, at the 100th Communist anniversary celebration, Premier Xi thundered that any nation who tries to “bully, oppress, or enslave us . . . shall be battered and bloodied from colliding with a great wall of steel forged by more than 1.4 billion Chinese people using flesh and blood” ([Wall Street Journal](#)).

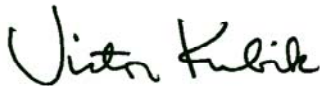
Dramatically different from what Deng Xiaoping personally told Mr. Armstrong, those powerful words of Xi seem to almost presage the terrible description in Revelation 9:16-17: “I heard the size of their army, which was *200 million mounted troops*. And in my vision, I saw the horses and the riders sitting on them. The riders wore armor that was fiery red and dark blue and yellow. The horses had heads like lions, and fire and smoke and burning sulfur billowed from their mouths” (New Living Translation, emphasis added).

There is basically only one country who could presently field an army of that size. Given China’s current leadership in hypersonic missiles and other warfare technology, the “fire and smoke and burning sulfur” seems like an apt description from a 1st century apostle grappling with what he was experiencing. We shall see.

Thank God Almighty that we hold the very truth of God! Thanks be to God for the knowledge of the meaning of His plan! As this world continues to advance toward a final end, let us embrace the words of Paul: “Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13, NLT).

And let us be about our Father’s business of proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the earth!

In Christ’s service,



Victor Kubik

Personal from Ministerial and Member Services...

Dear Ministers and Brethren,

MMS Boundary Waters Adventure—Pastoral Challenger Program!

Several months ago, Frank Dunkle, who heads up the Boundary Waters Adventure (BWA) Challenger Program for young adults, approached me with the idea of having such an adventure for some of our full-time men in the ministry. To me, this was an intriguing proposal and one in which I immediately saw strong merit.

The pastoral ministry is considered by many as a highly stressful occupation based on a variety of reasons. The ministry also has a great deal of impact on the overall health of God’s Church. These are two of the main reasons why I felt it would be beneficial to move ahead with this proposal. It is my belief that the better we know and respect one another in the ministry, the stronger the bonds of brotherhood and the greater unity we will surely have as a ministry.

Frank was having an “off year” from conducting the young adult BWA Challenger Program and he volunteered to be our guide on what may become a regular occurrence—a Pastoral Challenger Program!



Chris Rowland, Paul Moody, Mark Welch, Michael Fike, Doug Wendt, Jeff Lockhart, Skeets Mez and Frank Dunkle after completing their adventure in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness of Minnesota.

I decided it would be good to gather several in the ministry who were more recently hired for this opportunity. On Wednesday morning, July 7, Jeff Lockhart, Doug Wendt, Paul “Skeets” Mez, Michael Fike, Paul Moody, Chris Rowland, Frank Dunkle and I embarked on our wilderness adventure.

The first day was a bit grueling as we pushed on farther than we had anticipated due to the difficulty of finding a suitable campsite for our group that wasn’t already taken by others. We managed seven portages and 13½ miles that first day. A portage is where we needed to carry our canoes and all our supplies over land between bodies of water. The portages ranged in size from a few hundred yards to a half mile. Challenging as it was, the men all did their part and worked together to accomplish the task at hand. God blessed us with a wonderful campsite and we were able to get settled and even catch a few fish for dinner. The fish were excellent and the beauty of the waters and wilderness unparalleled!

The mosquitoes are somewhat legendary in the Boundary Waters and, as expected, showed up around sunset for their evening meal! We didn’t want to make it too easy for them, so we went to bed early as we were all exhausted and ready for a good night’s sleep—as good as one could expect to get in a crowded tent, in a sleeping bag, on the hard ground. Mind you, not complaining—just stating facts!



Frank Dunkle, Skeets Mez, Doug Wendt, Mark Welch and Paul Moody talk around a campfire at their campsite on Boulder Bay.

The next day, Thursday, we enjoyed a more leisurely morning getting to know each other better and about mid-morning a few of us explored the watery border between the United States and Canada by canoe. Four of us took the other two canoes and satisfied a real desire to do some serious fishing. We met back together in the evening to enjoy a very fine feast of walleye, northern pike, and smallmouth bass cooked in olive oil and corn meal. It was delicious and we greatly appreciated God's blessing of fine cuisine in a beautiful setting!

The next morning, we were all up early at 5 a.m. to break camp and find a new campsite where we could get settled in for the Sabbath. This was a much easier day than our first day, as we had only three portages and didn't travel as far. Again, we were blessed with a fine campsite and a good many more mosquitoes to battle!

That evening we had dessert consisting of one of the finest tasting fish of all—crappie.



Skeets Mez and Paul Moody show some of the crappie that they caught in Nina Moose Lake.

On the Sabbath, we spent most of the day in a circle discussing topics related to the ministry—greatest challenges, greatest rewards, reflections on our calling as ministers, lessons learned and how to better serve God and His people. It was a truly rewarding day as we all grew closer to each other as brothers in Christ. In part, Skeets Mez had this to say about our trip and our Sabbath conversations, “I had a very rewarding and fun time. I especially liked our discussions on the Sabbath. I found them very useful to me and my ministry going forward.”

Sunday morning we were up and at it very early as we broke camp, canoed the remaining miles, and completed three final portages.

It is difficult to assess the true value of such an awesome shared experience. I have no doubt that the eight of us are much closer now, having grown in understanding and respect for one another.

May you all have a very rewarding Sabbath and weekend!

In God’s love and service,



Mark Welch, Operation Manager for MMS

Update from South Africa

Earlier this month, the former president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, was sentenced to 15 months in prison for being in contempt of court. This past week, a number of riots broke out in Durban and KwaZulu-Natal—including looting, violence and setting shopping areas on fire—instigated by supporters of the former president. Two provinces are affected, namely Gauteng (Soweto’s province) and KwaZulu-Natal (Durban’s province). Some areas are completely devastated. The other 7 provinces in South Africa are calm at this stage.

While today the tensions have begun to ease somewhat, the police and military remain on high alert. Please pray for our brethren threatened by this, for the leadership of South Africa to deal effectively and decisively with this rampant lawlessness, and that peace will be restored without further damage and loss of life.

Pastor Roy Demont, along with Derrick and Cherry Pringle, are in the Durban area and report that they are safe at the present time and that our brethren in the area are also okay. Mr. Demont said that at the moment they have plenty of resources to help the brethren, the big question is “logistics”—as getting around is almost impossible.

Please pray for all our brethren in South Africa during this tumultuous time.

—Aaron Dean, International Advisor

Report from Southwest Camp

Southwest Camp concluded July 11 with 48 campers and 53 staff “in the zone” in the mountains outside of sunny Prescott, Arizona.



We greatly enjoyed the time we had with one another, and the respite that camp provided from the world and its ways. For 51 weeks out of the year, we are submitted to the wind and the waves of a world that is tempest tossed, but for this one week of the year, we have a chance to enter safe harbor. Our theme this year for the UYC programs is “Be Anchored to God,” and the Compass Check and Christian Living sessions focused on the importance of remaining close and connected to our anchor so that we can weather the storms of life. John Shedd once wrote, “A ship in harbor is safe . . . but that’s not what ships are built for.” Our goal this past week in all circumstances was to point our youth to God, and to help them to be prepared to face these storms when it is time to leave the harbor and navigate the open seas.



Throughout the activities, our youth had opportunity to interact with one another, and to build lasting relationships with one another, their brother and sister dorms, and the staff. We’re very appreciative of the dedicated, enthusiastic, and hard-working activity staff who have so graciously volunteered their time to be at camp to serve our youth. Without them, these summer programs simply could not happen.



We greatly appreciate your prayers on behalf of the Southwest Camp this year—there were numerous instances of God’s intervention throughout our time together. You may recall the prayer request we put out for rain as a result of the local fires. On June 25, the National Forest Service closed the 4 national forests surrounding the Prescott area as a precaution with the expectation that those forests would reopen Labor Day. After the prayer request went out for rain, it rained solidly enough within a week for them to lift those restrictions and reopen the national forests. There are so many other stories like this throughout camp—it was evident that God’s hand was with us.

Mr. Aaron Creech will be the camp director for the Southwest Camp in 2022, and Mr. Light will assist Mr. Rex Sexton at Northwest Camp.

—Benjamin Light, camp director, Southwest Camp

Festival Children’s Choir Music is Now Available

The Festival Children's Choir selections are now available for download on the UCG Feast website at: <https://www.ucg.org/members/feast/childrens-choir-music>

The guidelines for the Children’s Choir are posted there as well as vocal and instrumental versions of the two songs and lyric sheets. Parents, please follow the posted guidelines and be sure your children know the songs before arriving at the Feast.

—Steve Myers, National Music Coordinator

Winter Family Weekend is back! Save the Date!

(Pastors, please announce)

Planning is well under way for Winter Family Weekend 2021 in the Cincinnati area. It will begin the evening of Wednesday, Dec. 22, through Sunday, Dec. 26. Sports will be held once again at Courts4Sports and Wall2Wall as in past years. Save the date now and watch for registration details and hotel information coming in the near future.

Inside United Podcast



Darris McNeely—Trip to Turkey Part 1

Darris McNeely just returned from a personal trip to Turkey to study the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. Victor Kubik asks about his trip and the interesting locations that he visited.

ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-211-darris-mcneely-trip-to-turkey-part-1

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New Video Resource Available

“Anxiety, Depression and Despair Have Consequences” with Andi Chapman

On Wednesday, June 9, we welcomed Andi Chapman back to our *Beyond Today* TV studio to record a second presentation for our ministry and membership before a live audience. This time, she presented “Anxiety, Depression and Despair Have Consequences.”

Ms. Chapman is a Registered Nurse and Regional Clinical Educator for Heart to Heart Hospice. She is also owner and consultant for SelectMed Seminars, specializing in educational and consulting services for general community and healthcare staff.

The 80-minute presentation is available at an unlisted link on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/do2P7I3wjaw>. It is also available for download in both HQ and LQ video versions, and also as an MP3 audio file, at: https://unitedchurchofgodaia-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/person/rudy_rangel_ucg_org/EswHloYD0oxLoPDrKh68mhABuqT5RlaIe_bShPsPRbgQgg?e=8jfjrp

We encourage you to share it with your congregation or use it as part of a seminar or study on the topic of depression. These past 18 months have seen a dramatic increase in mental health issues, both within the Church and in our communities.

—Victor Kubik and Mark Welch

Feast Sermon CDs

Jacqueline Myers needs the names, addresses and PINs of those people needing a Feast sermon MP3 CD for the Feast of Tabernacles by July 23. Please send your requests to jacqueline_myers@ucg.org. You can obtain the PINs from your church listings. Church listings are available on each pastor's Intranet dashboard, or you can request a listing from Kathe Myers or Jacqueline Myers.

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