



United Church of God an International Association

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Personal From the President...

This past week the Council of Elders convened in Cincinnati. 10 of the 12 were able to be here in person. Once they have been completed, summary reports of the meetings will be available at coe.ucg.org/councilreport.



Aaron Dean addresses the Council of Elders on Thursday morning.

A Time of Rejoicing—and Humility

In just a few short weeks, we will collectively be celebrating the pinnacle of the plan of God, the awe-inspiring Kingdom of God! We will again personally experience a taste of how the Feast of Tabernacles pictures this incredible event. Because of the nature of this Feast, the Bible commands us: “you shall *rejoice* before the Lord your God seven days,” (Leviticus 23:40. English Standard Version, emphasis added throughout) followed by the Eighth Day, a special Holy Day with meaning for all of humanity.

Celebrating the Festival of Tabernacles in its modern form is a major blessing. During that eight-day period we experience joy, renewed (and new) friendship, great fellowship, and much more.

For many, it is the highlight of the year.

While we enjoy the physical rewards of the Feast, the Festival experience represents first and foremost a spiritual experience. Paul declared that God “calls those things which do not exist

as though they did” (Romans 4:17). The coming magnificent Kingdom of God is so real, so sure that it should be a secure anchor for us all. In accordance with God’s command, we can truly rejoice in this marvelous truth (Deuteronomy 12:12).

During the coming eight days we will joyously live (in part) and be deeply reminded of the incredible future that awaits those in the Church of God who have God’s Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11).

While we all are looking forward to this high point of the year, this year may include a special need to be patient and flexible in some areas, due to the continuing outbreak of the Delta variant of COVID-19. I know that many are tired and exhausted by this past year and a half of the pandemic. But we can still rejoice if we prayerfully hold an attitude of service and love.

So, this year, before and during the upcoming Feast, I would encourage all of us to reflect on the words of Paul in Colossians, and to meditate deeply about how we can apply these principles. In chapter three we find some highly relevant biblical direction:

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, *compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience*, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, *forgiving each other*; as the Lord has forgiven you, so *you also must forgive*” (Colossians 3:12-13, ESV).

How can we achieve this? “And above all these *put on love*, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And *be thankful.*” (verses 14-15).

A key to Festival success? “And whatever you do, in word or deed, *do everything* in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (verse 17).

If we hold fast to these critical principles, everyone will benefit!

What are we expecting when the Feast begins on Monday evening, Sept. 20? Festival coordinator Charles Melear recently gave an update to the Council of Elders. Here is a summary:

“Currently about 8,300 people are formally registered for the Feast. Another 1,000 are expected to register before the Feast. (Please update your registration if needed before the beginning of the Feast—that really helps in planning).

“As you may already know, this was the first time in years that some members were not approved for their first choice in the United States. This year the facilities at Anchorage, Alaska; Steamboat Springs, Colorado; and Panama City Beach, Florida, are all filled to maximum capacity.

“The Church is finalizing guidelines for festival coordinators to implement if there is a COVID-19 outbreak at their Feast site. A primary concern of the Church is for the safety of *all* those attending.

“Please note that U.S. feast coordinators *are* continuing with plans for a *normal* Feast year. However, coordinators have been instructed to prepare contingency plans given the uncertainty

of COVID-19 Delta infections, how local public health authorities may respond, and to promote safe conditions for assembly.

“What’s the extreme possibility? The Church recognizes that if COVID-19 levels rise dangerously in the weeks before the Feast starts, a possibility exists for sites to be canceled due to state mandates and regulations (and that could occur right up to the start of the Feast or even during the Feast). At this late date, the Church will *not* be searching for additional sites in the event of a cancellation. The Church recognizes that most members have already made travel and housing arrangements. In the (hopefully unlikely) event that a site is cancelled before Sept. 20, members must make their own decisions on whether or not to go to the site and observe the Feast virtually through online and phone connectivity.

“The Church did have a similar experience in 2020 in Bend/Redmond, Oregon. Last year, plans for the Oregon site were canceled because of COVID-19 issues, but about 250 members kept their housing reservations. The local festival coordinator in Oregon improvised and developed two outdoor activities for those who wanted to gather safely together.

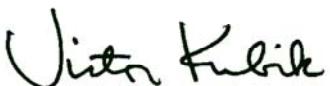
“As in the past, the Church will offer two daily live webcasting services. Currently daily services from Panama City Beach and Bend/Redmond will be streamed live, but different sites will be added if either of those sites need to be canceled because of COVID-19 issues.”

As we look forward to the Feast, let us remember that the primary purpose of the Festival season is to *worship God*. We experience physical, mental and spiritual refreshing by keeping that primary purpose first.

After a challenging year, we all need a refreshing recharge. So, in whatever situation you may find yourself, let’s approach any challenges or inconveniences directed by the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), filled with humility.

And especially now, since Jesus Christ will head this coming Kingdom of God as King of Kings, remember in this Festival season that “whatever you do or say, *do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17, New Living Translation).

In Christ’s service,



Victor Kubik

Inside United Podcast



Jorge de Campos and Barbara Botha—Angolan Civil War

Jorge de Campos gives a history of the wars in southern Africa involving Angola, and Barbara Botha recounts her and her sons' experience in the civil war that raged until 2002. This episode was originally aired on 8/15/2019.

ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-216-jorge-de-campos-and-barbara-botha-angolan-civil-war

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