



## New Feature Encourages Specific Prayers for the Preaching of the Gospel

By Peter Eddington

Operations Manager for Media and Communications Services

The apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian congregation to pray for him as he carried out Jesus Christ's great commission to spread the gospel (Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:19-20). "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1, King James Version, emphasis added throughout).

Paul clearly recognized the vital importance of this mission. He told the Corinthian brethren, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Just as Paul understood this, those of us in God's Church today realize that proclaiming the truth about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God is our first and foremost duty. Plus, we sincerely yearn to see people freed from spiritual deception and blindness.

Therefore, praying about the work of preaching the gospel, as Paul stated, is our marvelous opportunity and obligation. Indeed, the Bible compares "the prayers of the saints" to incense (Revelation 5:8). When physical incense is ground up into fine powder and burned, it releases a sweet-smelling fragrance. Similarly, when our prayers are precise and detailed, it is like a pleasant aroma to God (Leviticus 16:12).

Several weeks ago we introduced a new feature to be published periodically in the Ministerial and Member Services eNews, titled: "Pray for the Gos-

### Pray for the Gospel to Have Free Course (2 Thes. 3:1 KJV)



Pastors Ben Light and Paul Moody on a previous visit with the congregation in Owerri, Nigeria. The message about preaching the gospel in Nigeria is found under point five of this article.

pel to Have Free Course." Each message consists of one-to-three short paragraphs highlighting needs or challenges that the home office and our international offices face in spreading the gospel. The objective of this communiqué is to help us pray specifically about those issues. Considering this, we know that our Heavenly Father loves to hear the prayers of His faithful people. "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:12).

Below are synopses of messages that were published over

the past few weeks in the "Pray for the Gospel to Have Free Course" section of the MMS eNews:

**1. Johnnie Lambert**, pastor in New York and Eastern Europe, has been unable to travel to Estonia due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. He asks for your prayers that he can soon visit the brethren and print and insert Estonian language supplements into the Russian language edition of *Beyond Today* magazine.

**2. David Fenney**, chief executive officer of UCG-British Isles, asks for your prayers that

*Beyond Today* magazine subscribers will be increasingly motivated to renew their subscriptions and that office personnel can find ways to enhance the magazine's renewal process.

**3. Jorge de Campos**, senior pastor of the work of God in the Portuguese-speaking areas, asks for your prayers that God will provide laborers who know written and spoken Portuguese, and can be available to assist with counseling and traveling.

**4. Anthony Wasilkoff**, director of operations for the United Church of God in Canada, asks for your prayers that UCG-Can-

ada can find affordable print media advertising opportunities. He also requests prayers that the gospel message will not be obstructed—since there are growing government-imposed communications restrictions. In some instances, even the Bible has been referred to as "hate literature." Mr. Wasilkoff also asks that you to pray that God will provide a way to replace aging pastors in Canada.

**5. Paul Moody**, senior pastor for English-speaking West Africa, reports that significant violence is being carried out by a terrorist group in Southeastern Nigeria, which is resulting in many casualties. The brethren of the Owerri congregation are caught in the middle of this turmoil. Mr. Moody asks you to pray for the brethren's safety and that God will make it possible to resume visits to potential members and do outreach with the gospel—which has been greatly hindered due to the unrest.

**6. Peter Eddington**, operation manager for Media and Communications Services, stated that Google has been censoring the Church's ability to fully advertise online. Our ads are approved to run only to limited audiences. Our reach and effectiveness is being censored and controlled. Please pray that our ads can be available to all those who use the Internet and not just the audiences that Google selects.

**7. David Schreiber**, senior pastor for India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, has been unable to visit the region due to COVID-19 restrictions. He asks for your prayers that he will be

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## North and South Carolina Congregations Begin Holding UCG Booklet Discussions



The Charlotte and Hickory, North Carolina, and Columbia, South Carolina, congregations have recently begun a UCG booklet discussion series.

The goal is to help the brethren not only grow in grace and knowledge, but to do it collectively as a congregation to encourage iron sharpening iron. Each month, the congregation reads through a booklet on their own time, usually a chapter or two a week. Once a month, they have an interactive roundtable discussion after services to discuss things they learned, what inspired them or questions that arose from the topic. Since June, they have gone through *Who Is God?*, *Is God a Trinity?* and *What Does the Bible Teach about Grace?* At time of writing, they are reading through *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, and plan to begin *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* soon after that. The discussions



Members of the three congregations have spent time learning and bonding with each other through these interactive roundtable discussions.

have been very helpful and had nearly 100 percent participation! All of these free booklets can be read online or downloaded as PDF files. Hardcopies of each

booklet can also be ordered online and mailed free of charge. They can be accessed at [ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets](http://ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets).

Dan Preston

## Pastor Appreciation Day Held in Lexington, Kentucky



Kerby Burton led the congregation in the appreciation surprise for Jorge and Kathy de Campos.

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY—On Oct. 31, 2021, the Lexington congregation, plus Portuguese-speaking brethren in Brazil and Zoom Sabbath attendees from other areas of the U.S., Canada, Scotland, Portugal and Angola put together a surprise for our pastor, Jorge de Campos and his wife, Kathy.

In addition to pastoring, Mr. de Campos also serves as the Feast Coordinator for Brazil, as the leader of the Portuguese speaking work worldwide and on the Council of Elders. Our congregation let them know

## Upcoming: UCG Midwest Teen Prom to Be Held on March 12, 2022



The midwest teen prom welcomes more than 100 teens from all around the United States.

Save the date for the Midwest Teen Prom in 2022! We are planning to have it Saturday night, March 12, at the Blennerhassett Hotel in Parkersburg, West Virginia. This gorgeous historical hotel will again be a beautiful backdrop for our theme this year, “Red Carpet at Hollywood.” This annual event welcomes more than 100 teens from states all around the country.

The weekend includes a meet and greet Friday evening and a special Sabbath followed by a formal dinner and prom that

evening. Seniors will have a special recognition right before the dinner that parents can join. We are also planning to have a gym/sports event on Sunday, March 13, prior to departure, so please plan to stay a bit longer on Sunday to allow the teens this extra social time.

More detailed information about registration and hotel accommodations will follow in the coming weeks. Finalized information will be posted online at [midwestteenprom.com](http://midwestteenprom.com). We can't wait to see everyone! UN

## Upcoming: ABC Events

**March 20, 2022**—The annual ABC charity auction is scheduled for March 20, 2022, from 1–4 p.m. Please save the date and consider attending in person, or watching a live webcast on the LifeNets website. The program will feature music and comedy, and donations will help our brethren in Africa (more details to follow). We hope you will join us for some fun and to support a good cause!

**May 23-27, 2022**—The ABC Continuing Education program scheduled for May 23–27, 2022, will be held at the home office in Milford, Ohio. Faculty will teach excerpts of classes from the ABC curriculum, with lunch and a continental breakfast provided each day. The tuition is \$85 per person, or \$100 for married couples. Enrollment is limited; to register, contact Kathy de Campos at (513) 576-9796 or [kathy\\_decampos@ucg.org](mailto:kathy_decampos@ucg.org).

how much we have appreciated all the time and effort they put into tirelessly serving the Church in Lexington, Kentucky, Brazil, Angola, Portugal and on Zoom.

Mr. Kerby Burton read from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 describing the qualifications of an elder, and voiced that the apostle Paul might well have had Jorge and Kathy de Campos in mind had he written in the present day and observed their service to the Church. Mr. Burton also pointed to 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and stated that it is fitting that

the congregation acknowledge two of our brethren who have indeed led the local Church congregation and have labored mightily in the Word and doctrine.

The congregation gave them gifts of appreciation and flowers to enjoy at home. The Brazilian brethren sent a beautiful homemade card with inserts from individual members expressing their appreciation.

After services, a delicious potluck meal was enjoyed by all to help celebrate the day.

Kerby and Ellen Burton

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## Unity: From Spirit to Faith



Natalie Pedigo/Unsplash

*Jesus Christ leads and assigns gifts to facilitate the process of unity in the Spirit.*

Many people criticize Christians for saying one thing and doing another, and their observations are not unfounded.

In his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, Eli Stanley Jones writes that he once asked Mahatma Gandhi how missionaries could best convert India to Christianity. Ghandi responded by saying, “I would suggest first of all that all of you Christians, missionaries and all, begin to live more like Jesus Christ.”

*How we live makes a more powerful statement than anything we say.*

In our August 2021 meetings, the Council of Elders began a deep dive into our vision

statement to more clearly understand the path to realizing God's vision for His Church. The core of this statement is taken from Ephesians 4:16 and describes a level of unity that has challenged the Church over the years.

“The vision of the United Church of God is ‘A Church led by God's Holy Spirit, *joined and knit together by what every member supplies, with all doing their share and growing in love* to fulfill God's great purpose for humanity to bring many children to glory’ (Ephesians 4:16; Hebrews 2:10).”

The verses that precede Ephesians 4:16 describe the process by which this extraordinary

accord is achieved. In verses 1-3, Paul outlines the attributes that found our unity of the Spirit. In verses 4-10 he explains the aspects that make us one in Spirit. In verses 11-12 he shows how Christ leads and assigns gifts to facilitate this process.

In verse 13, Paul describes the destination of this walk in the Spirit, “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Note here how he aligns the unity of the faith with perfection—or completion—maturity in the nature of Christ.

In verse 15, Paul condenses this journey from unity of the Spirit to unity of the faith, in the phrase “*speaking the truth in love.*” Yet the Greek here is even more revealing.

John Stott, in his work, *The Message of Ephesians*, writes, “‘Speaking the truth in love’ is not the best rendering of this expression, for the Greek verb makes no reference to our speech. Literally, it means, ‘truthing (Gk. *alētheuontes*) in love,’ and includes the notions of ‘maintaining,’ ‘living’ and ‘doing’ the truth.”

“Truthing” does not exclude our speech, but what we say must first be expressed in who we are and what we do: “Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

To “*grow up in all things*” into Christ, our lives must confess the truth, hold to it and walk in it.

Paul's simple phrase “truth in love” is the means to fulfilling God's vision for His Church. To grow up into Christ, to be “*joined and knit together by what every joint supplies*” (verse 16) we must all be striving to live every word of God in the very Spirit of God. **UN**

### Updates From Ministerial and Member Services

Bill Bradford, Jr., is now the pastor for both the Chicago (Illinois) and the Beloit (Wisconsin) congregations. He had been appointed the interim pastor after the death of Randy D'Alessandro on Oct. 13.

In October, Gary Petty, pastor of the Nashville, Murfreesboro and Jackson congregations in Tennessee, was appointed the regional pastor for the Southeast region of the United States. Ken Martin had filled that role until his death in August.

Near the end of October, Andy Duran became pastor of the congregations in Southern New Hampshire, Worcester (Massachusetts), Saratoga Springs (New York) and Bangor (Maine). He had been serving as an assistant for Andy Diemer, who has now relocated to southern Florida, where he will now serve as an associate pastor assisting Chuck Smith in the Ft. Lauderdale and Vero Beach congregations.

In November, Lonnie Johnson was appointed the new pastor for the congregation in Springfield, Missouri. He has replaced Don Pirwitz in that role; Mr. Pirwitz will continue to serve the brethren in Springfield in the role of an elder.

On Dec. 9, 2021, James Ginn was re-credentialed as an elder by the United Church of God. He and his wife, Kristine, serve in the Jacksonville, Florida, congregation.

Please continue to pray for the men and wives who serve God and His people.

*Chris Rowland*

*Ordained an elder in 2003, Brian Shaw currently serves on the Council of Elders and pastors congregations in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Little Falls and Duluth, Minnesota, as well as Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He can be reached at brian\_shaw@ucg.org.*



### Quarterly Council of Elders Meetings Held in December

The Council of Elders held regular meetings at the home office Dec. 6-9, 2021. Three members participated via video link, while the others interacted in person together and with church staff.

The full agenda included the regular business of reports from operations managers and committee chairs, reviewing the annual financial audit, approval of administrative policy updates and consideration of ordination requests.

The Council also devoted considerable time to examining and revising the church's Strategic Plan, as it is mandated to do every three years. The plan

under development emphasizes doing the work of the Church through “Truth in Love.” Media and Information Technology staff reported progress on the needed process of redesigning the Church's website. Made necessary by external software updates, the change provides opportunity to make the site more efficient and responsive to user's needs.

In their discussions, the men show respect and cooperation, even though they hold different views and opinions. Several Council members commented that this was a very productive meeting.

*Frank Dunkle*

**Knute & Patti Josifek**60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**David Kevin Clark**

Sept. 10, 1961–Oct. 17, 2021

**Harvey Glen Cunningham**

Dec. 23, 1936–Nov. 24, 2021

**Ronald Leslie Goethals**

Aug. 13, 1956–Nov. 3, 2021

**Mary Jones**

Aug. 4, 1939–Oct. 22, 2021

## Anniversaries

### Knute and Patti Josifek

Knute and Patti Josifek celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Aug. 19. They were joined in the celebration by 30 friends at a celebration party on Aug. 22. They met at a dance 62 years ago in Baltimore, Maryland, where Patti lived at the time.

They have one daughter and four grandchildren ranging in age from 12 to 23 years old. They also have six special “church grandchildren.”

They were baptized together 54 years ago and serve as deacon and deacon’s wife in the Los Angeles, California, congregation.

## Obituaries

### David Kevin Clark

David Kevin Clark died on Oct. 17, 2021, at the age of 60 from complications of COVID-19. David was born on Sept. 10, 1961, in Pomona, California, to Roland and Dianne Clark. He spent the majority of his life in Redondo Beach, California, where he resided at the time of his death. He graduated from Redondo High School, where his 15-year-old daughters are currently attending.

After high school he attended California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. He later received his master’s degree in environmental engineering from the University of Southern California. His employment was originally with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and the past 27 years with

the Metropolitan Water District, also in Los Angeles. He last served as the design section manager.

David had a passion for developing and sustaining the engineering workforce, and the chief engineer of the district said that his passion and its results leave a significant legacy with their organization. He set a wonderful Christian example in the community and the workplace. Another section manager said, “He always wanted to help people as much as he could.” He was known at work, and by all who knew him, for his integrity, fairness, very high work ethic and his friendship. He set an example of a truly godly man.

At the age of seven, David came into the Church of God along with his parents and brothers. He was baptized on July 9, 1983. He has served the preteens and teens in the Garden Grove, California, congregation. He and his wife, Carolina, have also been avid supporters of the United Youth Camps.

David was extremely generous with time and money; he supported and helped Carolina’s family and many Church members in Peru. He loved people and his home was always open to the Garden Grove brethren and other friends. He was very good at keeping in touch with family and friends. He was appreciated for his love of life, serving attitude and willingness to always help others.

Travel and the outdoors were also an important part of David’s life. He traveled throughout Europe, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Peru. He loved camping, hiking and driving off-road in cars and on motorcycles.

David is survived by his wife, Carolina, daughters Karen and Kathleen, son James, parents Roland and Dianne Clark, brothers Kurtis (Krista), Craig (Jana) and numerous nephews and nieces.

The entire family is blessed to know that David is at peace and waiting for the resurrection, and that we will all be together again in the Kingdom of God.

### Harvey Glen Cunningham

Harvey Glen Cunningham was born on Dec. 23, 1936, to Roy and Alyce (Keenan) Cunningham in rural Brookings County, South Dakota.

Harvey learned of God’s plan through his mother, who started listening to the Radio Church of God broadcasts in the 1930s.

Harvey was married to Liane Pittenger on Aug. 18, 1957, and blessed with four children: Tod, Timothy, Kim and Terry.

Harvey came into the faith alongside his wife, Liane. They traveled to the Fargo, North Dakota, church weekly, and Omaha, Nebraska, or Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the Holy Days until early spring of 1968, when Sioux Falls, South Dakota, was established as a congregation.

Harvey was baptized on Nov. 24, 1968, and later ordained a deacon on the Day of Pentecost, June 7, 1987.

Harvey enjoyed his life as a farmer in South Dakota. He was willing to help anyone in need and always shared a joke with everyone. His greatest joy was spending time with his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and Church family.

Harvey died on Nov. 24, 2021, after a long illness. All who knew him will miss him greatly and look forward to seeing him again in the resurrection.

### Ronald Leslie Goethals

Ronald Leslie Goethals, age 65, died of COVID-19 on Nov. 3, 2021, surrounded by family. He was a devoted father and loving husband, a vibrant member of a large extended family and a great friend to many people.

Ron was born on Aug. 13, 1956, in Everett, Washington, to loving parents, Gilbert and Nancy Goethals. Ron grew up in a tight-knit family alongside his two brothers and three sisters in Federal Way, Washington.

Early in his life Ron fostered his love of working with anything mechanical. His passion for sports led him to the varsity basketball team at Decatur High School, where he and his brother became known as “the Sundown Kids.” Ron was an apprentice in his father’s bakery, and went on to become a master baker for 25 years. He was also a master in his craft in the sheet metal industry making flanges, and he helped create breakthrough machinery.

Ron was baptized in April 1982, and served in many ways wherever he was. He was ordained a deacon in October 2016, and his growth in service, his ability to teach, and his love for all the brethren from that time forward was a beautiful and wonderful testimony of spiritual growth. Ron’s love for God and for all his neighbors was an inspiring example, and helped to strengthen all who knew him.

Ron had a heart of gold. He was a dedicated water ski instructor at youth summer camps for decades, and had a gift for patiently teaching young people and making lifelong friendships. He also loved fishing, camping, off-roading and being a big kid at heart.

Ron was preceded in death by his mother, Nancy. He is survived by his loving wife, Cris-

tine Goethals; his father and step-mother, Gilbert and Leta Rae Goethals; five siblings, David, Theresa, Julie, Don and Shelly; and by six children and their families, including eight active and beautiful grandchildren.

### Mary Jones

Mary Jones, devoted and loving wife, mother and grandmother, died on Oct. 22, 2021, after battling cancer for more than two years. Her husband, Bob, and son, Michael, were at her side.

She was a friend to everyone she met, and was loved and respected by all who knew her. She was a genuine lady of grace and dignity with the outer beauty of a model, the inner beauty of a saint and the tenacity of a bulldog.

Mary devoted her entire life and all her energies to her family. She was selfless, generous and a wonderful listener—truly one of a kind. We rejoice in remembering her life and eagerly look forward to God’s resurrection of His saints when she will be restored and made whole again. Mary is survived by her husband, Bob, of 61 years, her son, Michael and her grandchildren, Meghan and Connor.

### Joan Loretta Lindula

Joan Loretta Lindula died on Oct. 21, 2021, in Federal Way, Washington, as a result of COVID-19. Joan was a member of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation of United Church of God. She was baptized as a member of the Worldwide Church of God in January 1973, and was a beloved friend of many Church members in various congregations and fellowships through the years.

Joan was born on Oct. 8, 1944, in Meeker County, Minnesota, the daughter of Eino and



**Joan Loretta Lindula**

Oct. 8, 1944-Oct. 21, 2021

Agnes Tormanen. She always felt thankful for her rural upbringing and had loving memories growing up on the farm.

Shortly after her high school graduation, she moved to the state of Washington. There she met the love of her life, Robbin Lee Lindula. They were married in Cokato Township, Minnesota, on her birthday—Oct. 8, 1966. She and Robbin loved and appreciated the beauty of the Pacific Northwest and shared a love of gardening. They hosted many visitors to their lovely home over the years.

Joan was an active and beloved member in her church. She was known as a peacemaker and bridge builder, helping friends in different fellowships to retain and strengthen their connections and fellowship with one another. Her faith was pure, and was a bright light of godly love to everyone around her. Joan's love for the Lord was the core of her life, and it was apparent in all she did.

Joan helped many people through volunteer work. She loved entertaining in the beautiful gardens she and Rob created. Many friends and family were treated to her lovely and gracious tea parties over the years.

Preceding her in death are her parents, Eino and Agnes Tormanen, and her brother Robert Tormanen. She is survived by her husband, Robbin, also a member of the Tacoma, Washington, congregation; brothers Richard (Anne) and Calvin (Susan); and many loving nieces, nephews, special cousins; and her Aunt Dorothy.

### **Kenneth Michael Martin**

Kenneth Michael Martin, 81, of Macon, Georgia, died on Aug. 21, 2021, while surrounded by loved ones. Ken was born in



**Kenneth Michael Martin**

Jan. 19, 1940-Aug. 21, 2021

Cleveland, Ohio, to Mike William Martin and Lucille Lily Gatzke. He graduated from Ambassador College class of 1966 as Student Body President and Valedictorian. He then went on to do God's work for the remainder of his years and in that time, he touched the lives of thousands of people. He was an accomplished musician as well as a loving husband, father and grandpa. He is survived by his lovely wife Barbara, four sons, two daughters, a sister, and an amazing 14 grandchildren. A reflection and celebration of his life was held on Aug. 29, 2021, in Woodstock, Georgia.

Mark Welch commented: "Since August 2018, I have had the privilege of getting to know Ken Martin much better than ever before. I had always enjoyed my brief interactions with Ken at many General Conference of Elders meetings over the years, but hadn't had an opportunity to get to know him very well. I always highly respected Ken for his obvious faithfulness and dedication to God and to the Body of Christ. His example of unwavering doctrinal integrity has never been in question. Even more importantly, his example of God's love and genuine concern for others spoke to me personally. I also enjoyed him sharing his musical talents at one of our General Conference of Elders talent shows!

"In addition, he and his wife, Barbara, seemed to me, the perfect ministerial couple. Barbara has always been warm, friendly and very welcoming to my wife and me.

"As a regional pastor, Ken and I worked more closely over the past three years and my initial observations have only been strengthened. I will greatly miss our conversations, our interac-



**James Marvin McGrew**

Sept. 17, 1947-Oct. 5, 2021

tions and his kind and gentle way of handling issues and giving input.

"Ken's wife, Barbara, told me that Ken was looking forward to collaborating on and helping lead a presentation and interactive workshop on 'The Power of the Gospel' at an upcoming pastoral refresher program.

"In late spring and early summer, Ken and I, along with six other pastors, were in the same 'The Word Fitly Spoken' speaking club that consisted of eight weekly meetings. I am confident I can speak for all the pastors in saying that Ken's wisdom and input regarding the effectiveness of our sermons were highly valued. Ken's enthusiasm for God's way was infectious. He was a real joy to work with and a true brother in Christ!"

From Gary Beam: "Ken Martin answered the call to ministry long ago, and has solidified himself in the annals of Church history as one who proved to be very profitable for the calling of ministry. 2 Timothy 4:8 says, 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.'

"This is Ken's reward, at the end of his journey here on this earth. He has fought his earthly battles and won the victory. He has finished the race that he was called to finish from so long ago, and he has held on through faith to secure blessings forevermore.

"Ken told me about six or seven weeks before his death that he 'was as passionate as ever for God and the calling to ministry' that he had been given. And he went on to say as well to me that 'they will have to carry me out!' He wanted to finish strong in the work that he had been given to



**Patrick John Read**

March 20, 1952-Nov. 28, 2021

do. And God honored him as he was able to be active right up until his final time on this earth. Ken honored God with his zeal and dedication in all things pertaining to righteousness."

### **James Marvin McGrew**

James Marvin McGrew of Mesquite, Texas, died on Oct. 5 at the age of 74. He was born on Sept. 17, 1947, in French Camp, California, and grew up in Dawson, Texas.

After graduating high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces serving in the Air Force for 6½ years, completing his duty as an Aircraft Mechanic Sergeant.

He later worked at Braniff as an aircraft mechanic until the company closed. Then he worked for the U.S. Postal Service, and later worked as a drug intake counselor for several years with the Salvation Army. He later retired after also working security assignments.

James was a member of the United Church of God. One of his personal objectives was to develop healthy spiritual relationships with those around him and to use any opportunity he got to help and mentor. He also developed a passion for fishing and loved to go to the lake and bond with fishing buddies.

He is preceded in death by birth parents Ben Marvin and Ona Faye McGrew; and his uncle and aunt, Boyd and Margaret Gipson, who adopted James at six months old and raised him.

He is survived by his wife Ferrell, sons Jamad Williams (Chriselle) and Curio McGrew (Destiny) and three grandchildren, Jaelyn, Jamad, Jr. and Kristyn, along with many other extended family.

James had a free spirit and lived life to fullest. He experienced many things in his life,

but his ultimate goal daily was to get closer to God, to be a good husband, father and mentor to his sons, and to be a genuine friend. He knew many people from different walks in life. He valued and had high regard for his marriage and home life. Above all, he believed in keeping peace. The family wishes to thank everyone for their kind expression of sympathy, prayers, calls and acts of kindness during this time of bereavement.

### **Patrick John Read**

Patrick John Read was born on March 20, 1952, in Kitchener, Ontario. Patrick died on Nov. 28, 2021, after a two-year battle with colon cancer.

In 1972 he met his soon-to-be wife Jo-Anne through a mutual friend. They were married on July 8 of that same year. They would have celebrated 50 years of marriage in July of 2022. Patrick and Jo-Anne had two children, Judy and Tony.

The Reads began to attend the Kitchener congregation in 1987. They were founding members of the Toronto congregation of United Church of God. Pat was ordained a deacon on the Day of Atonement in 1996. Then in January of 2009 he was ordained an elder.

He was hired full-time by the Church Oct. 1, 2010, and during his time as a pastor, he served congregations in Ontario, the Maritimes and Newfoundland. At the time of his death, he was the pastor of Windsor and London, Ontario, and Moncton and Sussex, New Brunswick.

In addition to his pastoring duties, Pat also assisted in setting up the DVD and MP3 program for Canadian shut-ins as well as helping in a number of duties in the National Office. He served on the Canadian National Council for a total of three terms (nine years) and was the Feast Coordinator for the Southern Ontario sites for many years.

Pat loved anything outdoors. From camping to landscaping, he approached these things fearlessly. He was a Jack of all trades. Anything his hand touched he turned into something beautiful. He loved cars and in recent years, restored an Oldsmobile that was gifted to him. Above all else, he loved God most and treasured his family deeply.



**Shirley Diane Sweet**

Nov. 1, 1939-Oct. 4, 2021

**Patrick Read obituary**  
*Continued from previous page*

Patrick's faith was evident to all who knew him.

Son-in-law Rudy Rangel said, "He taught me so many lessons that I will never forget. He taught me to be bold, confident and if I ever had a problem, systematic steps will make everything manageable. Above all he taught me to trust God—in the big things in life, but also the little. God cares about every minute thing and we can go to Him as our loving Father."

Family friends Gary and Barb Antion commented, "The Reads were active in serving as leaders of the teens and often hosted picnics at their rural home for church social gatherings in the summer. We grew to love them as warm, faithful, serving members. Pat's faithful service is an example for all of us to have noted and learned from. We will miss our brother and dear friend, Patrick Read!"

Fellow pastor in Canada Anthony Wasilkoff wrote, "In the



**Stephen Wendling**

Feb. 28, 1962-Sept. 29, 2021

early days of UCG in Toronto, the Reads—although having the furthest to drive—were usually the first ones to arrive at church. In the winter, by the time others of us arrived, the entrance was already shoveled and accessible. Pat Read was a man of high values, high principles and high standards. For him quality was job one in all things physical and all things spiritual. His signature greeting was a warm and affectionate embrace which I greatly miss already."

Pat will be greatly missed by many colleagues, congregants and friends. He is survived by his wife, Jo-Anne; son, Tony; daughter Judy Rangel (Rudy) and grandchildren, Simon and Landry Read; and Edie and Harry Rangel.

**Shirley Diane Sweet**

Shirley Diane Sweet, 81, of Benton City, Washington, died on Oct. 4, 2021, three months after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Shirley was born on Nov. 1, 1939, in Leavenworth, Washington, and was the second



**Dennis H. Wilhide**

May 11, 1942-Oct. 20, 2021

oldest of five children.

Shirley came to know the truth and was baptized in the spring of 1968 while living in Spokane, Washington. She is survived by two brothers, five children, 13 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

**Stephen Wendling**

Steve Wendling, 59, died on Sept. 29, 2021, at his residence in Bluffton, Indiana. Steve was born in Los Angeles, California, on Feb. 28, 1962, to Richard and DeAna Wendling. His mother survives in Claremont, California. He married Brenda Peterson in Lakeland, Florida, on July 1, 1985; she survives.

A 1980 graduate of Blair High School in Pasadena, California, Steve later received his associate's degree from Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1984. He worked as a chef for about 11 years, working at Ambassador College, Marriott Hotels and Hollytree Country Club before moving to Indiana in 1996. After the move, he became a reserve police officer for

the Berne Police Department.

Steve later worked at the Wells County Jail from 1998 until 2001, when he was hired as a deputy sheriff and attended the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. After graduating from the academy in 2001, Steve served as a Wells County Sheriff's Deputy until retiring at the end of 2013. He later worked a few other jobs, including Metaldyne in Bluffton for three years.

Steve loved traveling, especially with Brenda on their motorcycle. He was passionate about music, playing the guitar and singing, and was a member of a barbershop quartet and chapter while living in Texas. He also enjoyed fishing, camping, cooking, drawing, triathlons, weightlifting and playing volleyball.

In addition to his wife and mother, Steve is survived by a son, Jeremy (Beth Ann) Wendling of Huntington, Indiana; a daughter, Paige Moore of Fort Wayne, Indiana; seven grandchildren: Dustin, Rae, Dane, Patton, Penelope, Basil and Milo; two sisters, Teresa (Nelson) Ten Broek of Glendora, California, and Suzanne Carman of Portales, New Mexico; and two brothers, Scott Wendling of Claremont, California, and Nathaniel (Julie) Wendling of Glendora, California.

In addition to his father, Steve was preceded in death by a brother, Michael Wendling. A memorial service was held on Nov. 26, 2021, in Bluffton, Indiana. Memorial donations may be made to the United Church of God. Online condolences may be made at [www.goodwincaleharnish.com](http://www.goodwincaleharnish.com).

**Dennis H. Wilhide**

Dennis H. Wilhide, 79, of Port T passed away on Tuesday, Oct 20, 2021, at Evangelical Hospital in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

Dennis born May 11, 1942, in Frederick, Maryland. He was the son of Lloyd and Evelyn Wilhide.

Dennis was raised on a dairy farm in Windsor, Maryland, farming with his mother and uncle. He graduated from Frederick High School, Maryland.

While on the farm, he became familiar with the teachings of the Bible and joined the Baltimore, Maryland, Worldwide Church of God. Later, he became a member of the United Church of God.

At age 37, Dennis married Mary Alice Gaugler Pasquale on June 30, 1980. They shared 41 years together in marriage.

Dennis retired from the maintenance and shipping department of the Groce Silk Mill in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. He was member of UCG Lewistown, Pennsylvania.

Survived by his wife Mary Alice, and five (step) children: Vincent Pasquale (Michelle); Larissa Pasquale Holmes (Kenneth); Renita Pasquale Brummett (Scott); Vanea Pasquale Brosius (Mark); and Edwin Pasquale (Denise). Dennis had nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren whom he loved. Dennis also enjoyed the company of the Gaugler families and thought of them as his own family.

Dennis will be missed, but we all look forward to seeing him in God's Kingdom. **UN**

**Pray for the Gospel to Have Free Course**

*Continued from front page*

able to resume ministerial travels in order to visit the brethren and give greater spiritual nourishment to interested individuals. In addition, he seeks your prayers that God-fearing men will be raised up to care for our members and help teach and counsel newly called individuals.

**8. Wim Dekker**, UCG-Netherlands National Council chairman, reports that the Dutch website has recently been entirely revamped so as to make it easier to be found by search engines. He asks for your prayers that God will greatly bless the new

website and that it will be an ideal tool by which Dutch-speaking people may be led to the truth of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

**9. Roy Demont**, regional pastor for South Africa, reports that the country has sadly transitioned from a Western cultural orientation to a socialist/Marxist one that looks to China and Russia for guidance. Its leaders are implementing ideas and presenting solutions to problems molded on a Marxist philosophy. Consequently, God's Church is having to rely more and more on the United States for financial assistance in its ef-

forts to preach the gospel. Mr. Demont asks for your prayers that the Church in South Africa can keep moving forward in doing God's work despite many obstacles.

**10. Our brethren in Myanmar** need your prayers for their protection as military clashes between the government and a resistance group are ongoing. This situation has hindered the Church's ability to reach the public with the gospel. Also, please pray that God would send an elder to visit the country when it is safe. There are some prospective members and

several young people who may wish to be baptized.

**11. Peter Eddington** stated that recent negative comments by a television station manager airing *Beyond Today* programs was a reminder that the gospel message can be obstructed by the whims of a station manager or account executive. He asks for your prayers that God's blessing and guiding hand will be on our various efforts to preach the gospel and that we may find favor in the sight of those with whom we do business.

**12. Peter Eddington** reported that the United Church of

God is launching a major print promotion campaign from January-March 2022 in the U.S. A total of 75 million advertisements will be included in coupon inserts in Sunday newspapers. People will have the opportunity to request a free subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine and one of our Bible study aids. Please pray for God's blessings on this important effort.

Finally, we thank you in advance for your urgent and ongoing prayers that the gospel can be spread with great power and without restrictions everywhere on earth today! **UN**

## Facilities Manager

The United Church of God has announced a position opening for Facilities Manager. The position will be responsible for:

- Overseeing all building-related activities including utilities, maintenance, repairs, inspections and remodeling. Responsible for preserving the good condition of infrastructure and ensuring that facilities are safe, well-functioning and pleasant.
- Managing the upkeep of equipment, facilities and supplies to meet health and safety standards and provide a pleasant working environment.
- Handling and coordinating service contracts and inspections, ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Budgeting and tracking facility expenses including utility costs, striving to minimize expenditures.
- Handling landscaping, custodial and snow removal either through contracts or personally.
- Helping allocate office space along with facilitating the movement and/or purchase of furniture.
- Doing minor electrical, painting, plumbing, cable runs, repairs and other associated tasks.
- Working with fleet manager to care for and maintain vehicles.
- Directing and organizing event meetings and helping facilitate events at the home office.
- Tracking costs and helping organize upgrades and repairs at all UCG-owned U.S. properties, including the tracking of routine service and inspections to ensure that all buildings remain in compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Managing and organizing the warehouse and helping with mailing inventory.
- Running lift equipment to manipulate pallets of goods, and helping with any shipping needs if shorthanded.

High school education and up to four years related experience or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience is required. **UN**

## Mail Processing Manager

The United Church of God has announced an opening for Mail Processing Manager.

The position includes supervising incoming and outgoing mail processing for domestic and international areas; coordinating the shipping and receiving of mail, goods, office supplies and literature; supervising shipment by and delivery to USPS, UPS, DHL and FedEx; coordinating and administering distribution and maintenance of files and records of DVDs and CDs; by performing the following duties. Other duties may be assigned.

- Supervises the daily processing of incoming mail, including keeping reports and files of amounts, source codes and type.
- Supervises the daily processing of incoming and outgoing mail through the USPS and common carriers

such as DHL, UPS and FedEx.

- Prepares addresses for daily and weekly literature fulfillment using computer and mailing software.
- Performs label pulls for Church's regular publications, and directs them to appropriate outsource mailing houses.
- Supervises outgoing mail for appearance and correct postage amounts. Ensures that postage is correct according to destination, class and content. Keeps record of registered mail.
- Evaluates the most cost-effective method to mail magazines, newsletters, booklets and other materials, including correct postal sorting. Educates staff on lowest cost shipping and mailing methods. Stays up to date on latest postal trends and

cost-cutting measures.

- Supervises inventory of mailing supplies (envelopes, tape, bubble wrap, etc.) and office supplies (paper, pens, pencils, file folders, etc.).
- Coordinates receiving of mail and deliveries.
- Supervises mailings of sermon DVDs and CDs. Keeps title logs of electronic materials and stores extra inventory by log number.
- Supervises organization of mailing room and literature warehouse. Estimates required literature quantities and coordinates with managing editors the inventory requirements.
- Supervises additions and changes to address and name records in the data system for Church members and subscribers.
- Interfaces with international Church offices concerning

exchange of mail, literature supplies and mail processing procedures.

In addition, performs donation processing management functions for Financial Services department—including opening mail and processing donations, tabulating donations, data entry, preparing bank deposits, processing changes of address requests of donors and members, importing online donations made on Church's donation Web page and on Paypal, sending daily income reports to management, and posting donation batches.

A college degree or equivalent and four years related experience and training in advanced computer skills, typing and office duties is required. Experience working with databases, Web-based applications, mail and general office duties is essential. **UN**

## Web Developer

The United Church of God has announced an opening for a Web Developer. The position will require the following:

- Custom programming and Web application development for Church websites.
  - Testing, maintenance and troubleshooting of existing Church sites.
  - Contributing ideas and efforts towards internal projects and working as part of a team to find solutions for various problems.
- Plus, other duties as assigned.

### Qualifications, knowledge and skills:

- A solid understanding of PHP, AJAX, HTML, Javascript, and CSS, or knowledge of other programming languages and a willingness to learn.
- Familiarity with source control systems such as Git.
- Ability to communicate technical ideas to business users and other teams (design, QA).
- Ability to both collaborate with team members and

to work independently.

- Eager to embrace current and emerging Web technologies.

The following experience would give an applicant preference:

- Knowledge of SEO coding best practices.
- Proficient in Drupal, including custom module development, key contributed modules and core API.
- Two-plus years of Drupal hands-on development experience.
- Experience integrating open source and third-party applications into existing systems.

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) is preferred. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a resume of their education and/or experience. **UN**

## Systems Administrator/Programmer

The United Church of God has announced a position opening for Systems Administrator/Programmer.

The position will be responsible for:

- Overseeing, maintaining and upgrading server and desktop hardware and software in a Microsoft Windows domain running in virtual environments.
- Helping coordinate corporate technology direction, development, production activities and budgeting for the Information Technology department.
- Helping with supervising, implementing and maintaining local and cloud computing systems and equipment.
- Performing and verifying backups and disaster recovery.
- Helping optimize and oversee network infrastructure and security.
- Programming using .NET

and/or Microsoft Access languages.

- Providing 2<sup>nd</sup> level help desk support for local and remote users.
- Assist Information Technology Manager with special tasks and duties.

### Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills

- Proficient in the latest Microsoft Windows server and desktop OSs, AD, and VMWare technologies.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite and Office 365 management.
- Proficient in at least one modern programming language, preferably .NET or Microsoft Access VBA. Drupal/PHP skills are a plus.
- Strong understanding of Web technologies.
- Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.

College degree and one year experience, or three years related experience or equivalent are required. **UN**

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God. To request a job application or for questions about the positions, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org).

Current job postings for the United Church of God may be reviewed at [ucg.org/members/news/current-job-openings](http://ucg.org/members/news/current-job-openings). This webpage will be updated as positions are filled or new ones become available.

By Jolinda Schreiber

Since I was very young, I have been inspired by the stories from many individuals about how God miraculously worked in their lives. I've marveled at how a series of events led to understanding God's truth and changed their lives forever.

The first story I ever heard was from my father, James Jenkins. My dad was a very ordinary young man who loved sports and played high school basketball and football. He never graduated from high school because he enlisted in the U.S. Navy before he was 18 to be part of WWII. I believe he told them he was 18 and they didn't check to see if this was true. After two years in the service, he came home and married a sweet girl named June Moore. Six years later, at the age of 25 he had three daughters. He worked hard for his family but still liked going to the pool hall after work to play a game with the guys. It was not unusual for him to join in a game of poker afterwards and spend his winnings to buy his daughters a winter coat or a new pair of shoes.

In 1953, my dad was working in Wichita, Kansas, at Beechcraft, wiring aircraft. The guys usually brought lunches from home and enjoyed sitting together during their break. On several occasions, one of the guys would ask Bible questions, directing them at the more religious (and rather self-righteous) guys in the group. Dad, not a churchgoer or at all religious, listened gleefully when one of his friends would ask "trick questions" which the guys couldn't answer. One day the question was asked, "Why did Jesus speak in parables?" The more religious guys answered that it made it easier for the people to understand. Dad's friend replied, "That's not what the Bible says," and he quoted scriptures. Dad thought this was great and

privately went to his friend to ask where he got all those questions and answers. His friend replied that he read *The Plain Truth* magazine. Dad immediately wanted to know how he could get this magazine so he could join in on the lunch conversation and in his words, "Ask some questions that would stump these guys."

Once the magazine arrived, he couldn't put it down, and also opened up his Bible for the first time. He began to see things he'd never seen before and the more he read, the more interested he was. Surprisingly he found out that his mother had been receiving *The Plain Truth* for years and he never knew it. He heard there was a radio program as well and began listening to Herbert Armstrong on a regular basis. He was now 27 years old, and that was when I was born.

Now with four little girls, he began to look at life differently and make changes. He contacted the Radio Church of God and requested a ministerial visit. He was baptized by Gerald Waterhouse on a baptism tour in the spring of 1954. Two years later, another daughter was born. There was no church congregation in the area, so he studied at home and each Sabbath he read Bible stories to us. I remember him reading the Monte Wolverton Bible stories and always stopping at the most exciting place, saying, "This is where we will pick up next time."

Finally, a church congregation started in Wichita, Kansas, and we began attending Sabbath services. During all this time, mom was not at all interested in this new religion of his. She liked some of the changes dad was making but also liked her family's Christmas and Easter celebrations. She would not go to weekly Sabbath services with us, but would go to the Feast of Tabernacles. Mom recalls that she thought that dad would eventually give up on this crazy religion.

However, my dad was committed and never looked back. He became actively involved in the local congregation and started attending spokesman club. He had never been comfortable with public speaking and worked hard to improve himself, becoming a great storyteller as the club improved his speaking ability. He loved people and enjoyed serving. When my dad was ordained a deacon, my mom was surprised as she was convinced that he'd never go anywhere in this church with a wife at home who would not support his new religion.

I remember her saying, "Wow, he is going to leave me behind. Maybe I should check this church out for myself."

Eventually mom started attending Sabbath services and at the Feast of Tabernacles 1961 in Big Sandy, Texas, she counseled with a pastor and was baptized. Together they began to serve the congregation in Wichita, Kansas, and dad was ordained an elder. In 1965 dad was invited to attend Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, for a one-year training program and later was sent to New Orleans, Louisiana, as an associate pastor assisting Vernon Hargrove. In 1967 he pastored for the first time the congregations in Jackson, Mississippi, and Monroe, Louisiana, and for the next 35 years, my parents loved serving God and His people in Missouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, New Jersey, Texas and then Mississippi where he later retired.

God's calling changed my dad's life and the lives of his mother, his aunt, his wife and all of his children and grandchildren. Submitting his life to God, he lovingly served many church congregations all over the United States. It's a blessing that God reached down, saw one ordinary young man and touched his life—which changed the lives of many others. To God be the thanks and to Him be all glory. **UN**



Top left: James Jenkins served as a pastor for more than 35 years.  
 Top right: Jim and June's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in July 1997.  
 Middle: Jim and June with their four daughters and families.  
 Bottom: Jim and June with their four daughters in 1960.

**Ambassador Bible College Magnetic Calendar Fundraiser: Order Yours Today!**

ABC has again created a magnetic yearly planner featuring God's Holy Days and Feasts. This 11 by 8½ inch glossy magnetic refrigerator calendar can be written on (and erased) with a dry erase marker for events or temporary grocery lists or appointments. The calendar is helpful as a Feast planner and has already been printed so we can ship them out quickly. Volume allows ABC to make these available at \$6 each or 2 for \$10.

Go to [ucg.org/members/news/abc-magnetic-calendar-21-22](http://ucg.org/members/news/abc-magnetic-calendar-21-22) to download an order form for you or your congregation. We will ship to the pastor/church contact for pick-up at services.

When filled out, please mail the order form and payment (payable to "ABC Student Fund") if already collected to: Ambassador Bible College, 555 TechneCenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. You can send an order in without payment and follow up

with payment after delivery. We do not want to make others wait when payment is slow. Individual calendars can also be ordered and mailed to a home address. Please add \$1 to the price for shipping costs. If you have questions about your order, or to order individual calendars, email [ABCfundraiser@ucg.org](mailto:ABCfundraiser@ucg.org).

Thank you in advance for your support of ABC.

Matthew Rains,  
 ABC Student Body President

2022 YEARLY PLANNER

The image shows a 2022 Yearly Planner with 12 monthly calendars. Each calendar is a grid with days of the week and dates. The months are: JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL, MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, and DECEMBER. The planner includes religious observances such as Holy Days and Feasts. The logo for Ambassador Bible College is visible in the top right corner.

# GN

## The Good News

### Faithful Thomas

While it may seem simple, reading and analyzing the Scriptures critically is a key to better understanding what is actually written.

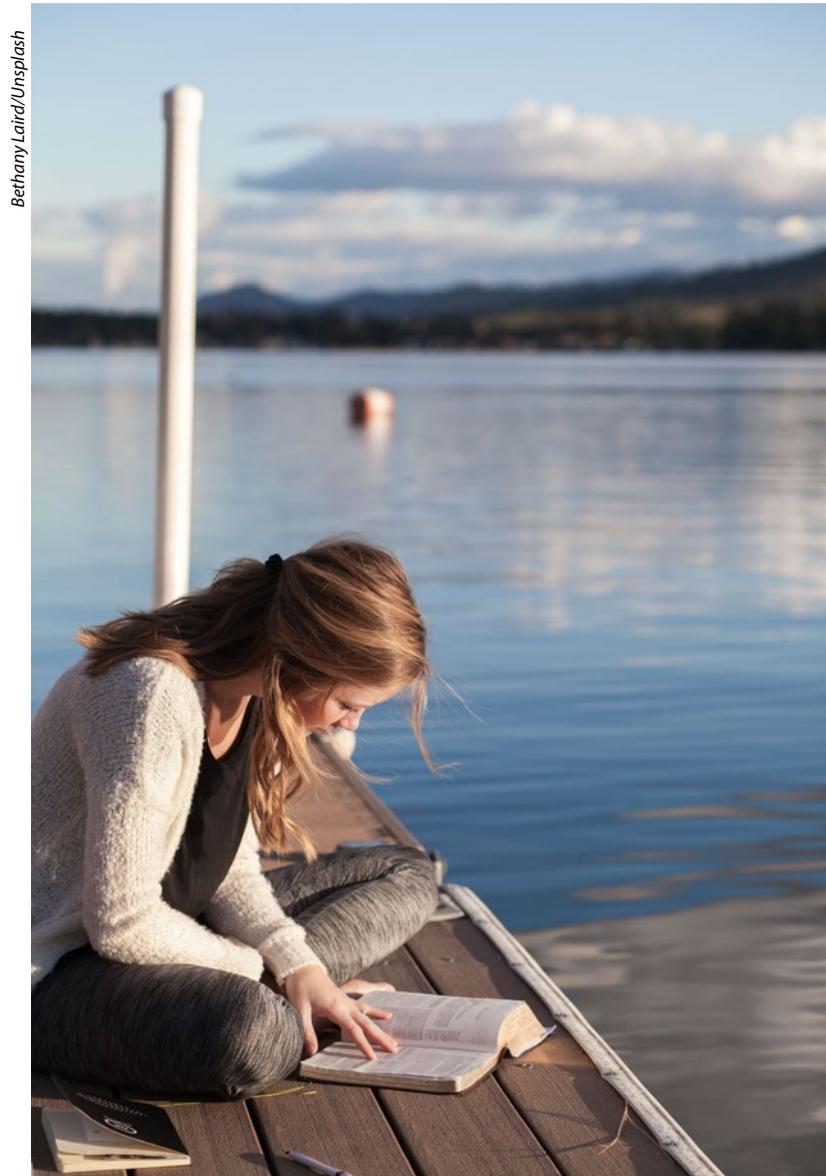
By Micah Gunn

Christians often claim to know their Bibles well. The study and contemplation of Scripture is meant to be a part of everyday life, and with this constant presence there should naturally develop a certain familiarity with the Bible. This familiarity with God's Word is an excellent goal and should be consistently on the mind of a dedicated Christian—but familiarity can also bring a certain level of complacency. As we study certain key parts of (or stories within) the biblical text, over time we may feel like we have a firm grasp on most of what is written—and the intended meanings. Eventually, we may allow certain words, phrases or preconceived notions that often get touted in theological conversations to intermingle with the text itself, making it hard to remember exactly what is held within Scripture, and what is not.

For example, many have heard the phrase, “God will not give you more than you can handle,” but might not be able to place exactly where this passage is. That is because those words aren't found in any translation of the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul discusses the idea of God not allowing you to be tempted beyond what you can bear and providing a way of escape from those temptations. While this might seem like a small difference, often God *does* give us more than we can handle *on our own* and expects that we will rely on Him, for Whom nothing is too big to handle. Therefore, these phrases are not synonymous. If we continue to use the common saying mentioned above, speaking of it as if it were included in Scripture, we only perpetuate the idea in the minds of others. It can potentially trip them up later, and unwittingly misrepresenting Scripture can discredit us in the eyes of skeptics of Christianity.

#### Examples of how this can be a problem

This issue that we can have in our Bible study—feeling as if we know Scripture so well that we quit analyzing the text critically—can inhibit us from un-



Bethany Laird/Unsplash

*A familiarity with God's Word should consistently be on the mind of a Christian—but familiarity can also bring a certain level of complacency.*

derstanding what is actually written there, versus what we assume is probably in there somewhere. This issue doesn't just have the potential for us to make assumptions about biblical lessons, but can also cause us to gloss over entire people by painting them with incredibly broad strokes. For some individuals in the Bible, this broad strokes method of remembering them works in their favor. Abraham is known as “the man of faith,” and David is known as “a man after God's own heart.” These descriptors are straight out of the pages of the Bible and are true. However, these descriptors, when we remember them alone, might cause us to have flawed thinking about these individuals. We often remember David as an overall good person in spite of his flaws and we remember Abraham as a good person often without remembering his flaws. These descriptors,

when not accompanied with critical thinking and good study, can cause us to forget that these men were both human—they had moments of faith and strength, and moments of doubt and weakness.

However, many are comfortable calling Abraham faithful as the Bible does, but often forget that it wasn't just Sarah who laughed at the idea of having a child in old age. Genesis 17:17 says, “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’” Fortunately for Abraham, we remember his good attributes far more than his shortcomings and moments of doubt. With David, we remember that he is “a man after God's own heart” despite his shortcomings and moments of doubt.

#### The apostle Thomas

Another individual in the Bible isn't so lucky, however. Many are familiar with the phrase, “Don't be a doubting Thomas!” This references the apostle Thomas, who said in John 20 that he wouldn't believe that Christ had risen unless he had some concrete proof—he wanted to literally feel the wounds of the crucifixion. This one moment in time, and a preconceived notion about what this account tells us, has entirely washed over the reputation of one of Jesus' 12 apostles. “Doubting Thomas” has become such a commonplace phrase that it may be difficult to doubt its biblical accuracy. However, if we follow three simple steps when studying our Bibles, we will find ourselves much closer to effective study of Scripture.

First, we need to refuse to blindly accept things that might be misleading; second, we need to read the text for ourselves rather than relying on our memory of it; and third, we need to dispel any preconceived notions with what we learned from that text. A closer look at all accounts written of Thomas, as well as a closer look at his “moment of doubt” itself, will show us a lot about this man. It is also good practice for how to study our Bibles so that we don't continue to make wrong assumptions throughout our learning based on external things we might hear about Scripture rather than what we read from Scripture.

*Continued on next page*

*Faithful Thomas*  
Continued from previous page

## Refuse to blindly accept things that might be misleading

If we refuse to blindly accept this descriptor of Thomas, we would start by reading other accounts about Thomas to get a better understanding of his character. The first account that gives us an indication of Thomas' character can be found in John 11, just prior to Jesus resurrecting Lazarus. The apostles knew that if Jesus returned to Judea—which had become hostile territory for Him—the Jewish people would stone Him, and so they all tried to dissuade Him from returning. Thomas, however, makes a bold claim: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). Some believe that the Jewish people didn't have any concept of a dying (much less rising from the dead) Messiah and could potentially claim this to be a bluff on the part of Thomas. However, even if Thomas didn't believe Jesus would actually die by returning to Judea, extraordinary faith is still shown. Perhaps Thomas believed Jesus could be killed in this endeavor and was willing to die with Him. Perhaps Thomas didn't believe Jesus would be killed but was willing to die *for* Him, or perhaps Thomas believed so strongly in the God-given power of Jesus that he wasn't as afraid of the idea of dying as the other disciples were. Either way, this passage shows Thomas showing incredible boldness and faith in Jesus Christ.

Another reason we might consider Thomas bold, even in his moment of doubt, is found in a warning given by Christ to His disciples in Matthew 24. While His disciples asked Him about the end of the age and His second coming (as they were slowly starting to piece together the parts), Christ warns that false teachers would come in the end attempting to deceive the elect into following false messiahs. Jesus illustrates this point and gives an admonition when He says, “Therefore, if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or, ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:26). When the other disciples came to Thomas saying they had seen the risen Christ in the inner rooms of their living place, it seems that part of Thomas's doubt was fueled by a desire as an elect follower of Christ to not be deceived. Though his boldness might have been taken a bit too far when he said he would not believe unless under certain conditions, and his faithfulness might have been in his understanding of prophecy rather than a proper expectation of Jesus' resurrection three days and three nights after His burial, this background and context does show impressive characteristics of Thomas that should not be ignored. Why, then, is “Faithful Thomas” not the nickname we know him by? Obviously, Thomas' stubbornness and overconfident speech are not things to emulate and the account of his meeting the risen Christ is a cautionary tale, but might we get a clearer picture of this account by adding some context and reading the text for ourselves?

## Read the text; don't just rely on your memory of it

In Luke 24:36-40, we can read a parallel and complementary account following Jesus' appearances to His disciples: “Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts



*Thinking critically about the text can give us confidence in understanding what God has for us in the pages of the Bible.*

arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.” Strikingly, Jesus speaks to the disciples in this account of the doubts (plural) that He is aware that they have in their hearts (again, plural) showing that all of the disciples had a measure of skepticism about Jesus truly being risen from the dead.

What is incredible about this account is that, if we read these accounts in Luke 24 and John 20 as a harmony, we see that Jesus' admonition to Thomas, that those who have not seen and have believed are blessed, is not necessarily a scolding of Thomas—or even directed only at Thomas—but is a statement of fact about all who would believe in the apostle's testimony after His departure, directed at all the disciples who needed that same evidence to be convinced of the resurrection. If anything, Thomas' immediate and decisive declaration of “My Lord, and my God!” at the end of the account shows a willingness to change his doubt into belief and a teachable heart that isn't brought out quite as strongly with the other disciples.

## Expel preconceived notions about the text

Thomas was a flawed human being like we all are. However, it seems clear when we follow the process of refusing to blindly accept things that might be misleading, and actively reading the text for ourselves in context rather than relying on our memory of it, that we can now expel this preconceived notion about the text that Thomas' overarching characteristic to remember was doubt. To continue calling Thomas, “Doubting Thomas,” requires that we call all of the disciples doubting as well. It would also require that we take all people who have ever had doubt (including faithful Abraham and our own selves) and label them as doubters as well. If we read and study our Bibles with good processes on how to think critically about the text, we can be that much more confident that we know what God has for us in the pages of His Word. **GN**

## Loving When It's Difficult

In times when it is hard to love, and with the people who are difficult to love, will we work hard to reach across the gaps to understand others?

**By Keith Lippincott**

*with contributions by Stephanie Lippincott*

One year at camp one of my campers told me he couldn't sit next to the young lady he was assigned to at the end-of-camp banquet.

“We just don't get along,” he told me.

“Let's sit down and talk about this,” I answered, and I shared with him a personal story.

One winter night, many years ago, after spending time with a schoolmate whom we'll call Ed, I turned to my dad as we walked toward his truck and said to him, “There aren't many people I don't get along with, but Ed is the most annoying guy I've ever met. I just can't stand him.”

My dad and I both helped out with my high school robotics team. In the evenings, the students on the team would cut metal frames, put wheels on axles, wire up circuit boards and motors, and work together to build a robot.

But this kid, Ed, would often disagree with group consensus and do his own thing.

“No Ed, we can't put sharp edges on the frame even if it would look cool. It's a safety hazard.” Later we would find sharp edges anyway.

One time I was using a tool, looked away, then looked back, and the tool was gone.

“Ed, can I have that tool back? I was in the middle of something.”

“No. I'm using it!”

*So was I, I thought.*

So, my comment to my dad about Ed being annoying was not altogether unwarranted. Yet, my other Father in heaven must have been listening and decided to act.

The next summer, Ed and I ended up in a small office working together on a project five days a week for ten weeks—just the two of us.

## Loving our enemies

“And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?” (Matthew 5:47).

Jesus told us to love our enemies. Maybe that doesn't seem as relevant today as it did in the past. We don't have Pharisees literally plotting to kill us like Jesus did. But perhaps we have people making our lives difficult at school or at work or in church. The idea of loving people like that might seem like an aspiration we will reach eventually, but for now simply isn't realistic.

Throughout the pandemic, I ran into people with differing viewpoints and ideas for how to navigate the



Zoe/Unsplash

*You can't control people, but you can love them.*

### Think expansively

*“I’ve always felt that a person’s intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic.”*

—Abigail Adams

“There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:5-8).

Our ability to effectively understand and interact with others peacefully is based on our ability to create an accurate mental model of the world and people’s many viewpoints. The more we do this, the more we see an intricacy in God’s plan and the beauty of diversity within a body. We will see as God sees. All these perspectives we come in contact with have some value and if we are willing to listen, we will find the pieces we had never considered before—pieces of a whole and absolute truth.

The second part of Proverbs 11:14 reads: “But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Someone who has a different viewpoint than you do may also have wisdom in areas that you haven’t developed yet. It’s important to be willing to think expansively and seek to understand where people are coming from—while always holding everything up against the light of biblical truth, and always allowing the Spirit to guide us.

### In a tight space

The summer after my comment to my dad about Ed being annoying, I started an apprenticeship at my dad’s company. I worked in another division of the company than him, but every day I would ride with him to work, and walk over to a small office with two desks in it— one for me, and one for Ed.

Yes, of all the people in the world who applied for this apprenticeship program, and of the approximately 50 companies choosing from the applicant pool, my dad’s company chose Ed and me—and *only* Ed and me.

Our mentors, the ones guiding us through the apprenticeship that summer, commented on how drastically different Ed and I were. I was much more methodical and wanted to learn about what I was working with before jumping in. Ed jumped into things without any thought at all. Over the weeks working with him, I realized his approach was effective in some situations. And to my surprise, we gradually became friends.

We had a shared interest in photography and I was impressed with some of his photographs. On days when we had nothing to do, we went for long walks around the work campus together, just chatting and exploring. At the end of the ten weeks, the most annoying person I had ever met had become a friend.

This is the story I told my camper. Then I gave him a choice: he could back out of sitting next to this young lady he didn’t get along with, or, if he went through with it, I’d make sure he had his best friend at the table too. I encouraged him to think about it and pray about it. After a short leave away from the rest of the dorm to pray, he returned to tell me he’d go through with it.

### Change starts with self

*“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”* Philippians 2:3.

*“I used to want to fix people, but now I just want to be with them.”—Bob Goff*

We can’t expect everyone to change for us, not even to understand us. The only thing we can really do is try to understand others and, with the help of God, change ourselves. When others see us making the effort to reach them, they may just do the same in return. This is what Jesus did. He set the ultimate example by humbling himself to the point of death. He came to meet us at our level, in the hopes that we would meet Him at His. Therefore, as Christians, we should live a life of growth, learning to reach out to others as Jesus did for us.

If you feel isolated and like no one gets you, rather than becoming frustrated, try to remember that others may feel the same way. Reach for them, bridge that gap, and say, “I see where you’re coming from.”

### Letting them walk away

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” Romans 12:18.

We are told by Paul to try to live peaceably with everyone—as much as depends upon us. In this statement we see where our responsibility begins (with ourself) and where it ends—with the other person. Sometimes, as hard as we might try, we may never be able to connect with another person. I’ve had to learn how to forgive people but at times, just leave them be.

One of my coworkers once told me that he loved calling people and talking to them on the phone. He has many people on his call list—more than he can cycle through frequently. So, when someone isn’t showing reciprocity or at the very least, appreciation, he lowers their name on the calling list and talks to others more.

We have a limited set of time on this earth. It’s important to flex our love muscle, but it’s also important to recognize when to let someone walk away. Sometimes leaving a person in peace is the way to retain peace. After knowing you’ve done what you can to create peace, it may be best to let them be. And investing too much time in a relationship which is going nowhere can mean investing too little time in a relationship that would.

Jesus, who was perfect, walked with Judas for years but then came to the point where He dismissed Judas: “What you do, do quickly” (John 13:27). Judas was not forced out, he walked out that door. Love hard, but know when to let them walk away. You can’t control people, but you can love them.

### Conclusion

The camper returned after the banquet and told me that it actually went well. There was no animosity between him and this young lady and he was glad he went through with it.

A great peace comes from making amends with someone you were previously at odds with. Not only do we find peace, but we find a greater understanding of the world and the people in it. Ever since that summer with Ed, I have seen greater value in trying to create friendships where they are hard. In my personal experience, as I keep reaching for the jars, the recipes—the mixtures of friends and people living around me—grows greater, and so does my understanding of the greatness of God’s Kingdom and what He is building by bridging the gaps between these varied personalities and people. Through understanding others, we can learn to humbly recognize how small each of us is in a vast sea of people, ideas and perspectives—even among those who have God’s Spirit. It is through this type of thinking that we can learn the practical value of loving our enemies. **GN**

unprecedented time. Some of these conversations got my heart rate up as we didn’t see eye to eye. Sometimes comments people made seemed so insensitive or foolish that it made me angry. But despite these feelings, I tried to be understanding no matter what and learned some lessons along the way.

### Reaching

Imagine a jar on a top shelf that is just out of reach. You shrug and say, “Not worth it. I don’t even know what’s inside that jar.” And you turn your attention to the more reachable jars. Is this how we view the things in our kitchen? Is this how we view our relationships?

Sometimes it takes effort to reach out and understand the way another person thinks. We may not know what is inside that top shelf jar and we will never know if we don’t reach. What if it contained the missing ingredient to the greatest recipe we have ever made? Or perhaps it truly was nothing we needed, but by practicing reaching, we are prepared for the day we encounter an almost impossible jar. Maybe that jar, which really does contain an idea that will change our life for the better, we can access because we are used to reaching—rather than staying in our comfort zone on the lower shelves.

Will we ask God to help us reach the people who might change our life, rather than shutting ourselves into the space of our own heads? Sometimes another person’s viewpoint might be hard to understand. If you disagree, you have to intentionally reach and try to understand where they are coming from.

### Recognizing the fool

If we focus only on our own viewpoint (avoiding the jars out of reach), we will be able to effectively interact with those who agree with us. However, we will come in conflict with those who don’t.

With a narrow view on the world, those who fall outside our view will seem like irrational fools. The irony is that viewing others as foolish and wrong may be a good sign we are the ones who are the fools: “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (Proverbs 18:2). Those with wisdom warn: “Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” (Romans 12:16); “Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man” (Proverbs 30:2).

It’s good to acknowledge that we don’t understand everything, because it will actually help us learn to understand a vast world which is too big to fully know.

## What Is Your Spiritual Self-Image?

In preparing for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, it is important to examine ourselves for sin. To accomplish this, we need an accurate picture of our spiritual condition, which we can have by looking into God's spiritual mirror.

By John LaBissoniere

When I was a boy, my brothers, sisters and I enjoyed visiting the annual Wisconsin State Fair. The livestock and machinery exhibitions were always interesting, and the amusement rides and game booths were great fun. Upon entering some attractions, we would occasionally find "carnival mirrors" which, when we stood before them, would reflect distorted but humorous images. Some mirrors would make us look fat or squat while others made us appear hilariously thin. Obviously, what we saw in those comical mirrors didn't represent our true physical images.

But what about your true *spiritual* self-image and mine? Do we have an accurate picture of our *real, inner person*? Let's focus on this question as we prepare for the upcoming Passover and Holy Day season of Unleavened Bread. During this time, we are to particularly examine our lives for sin, which is the breaking of God's law (1 John 3:4). As 1 Corinthians 11:28 states, "But let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (emphasis added throughout). As we scrutinize our personal spiritual condition, we need to be especially honest with ourselves.

In this respect, it would be valuable to be reminded about the Pharisees of Jesus' day. While believing they were spiritually upright, these men completely misjudged themselves. Although they gave the *external* impression of virtue, Jesus Christ perceived their *real* inner selves (Luke 18:9-12). Knowing their minds and hearts, He said to them, "you also *outwardly* appear righteous to men, but *inside* you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28).

### Evidence of genuine spiritual fruit?

In another example, Jesus and His disciples were traveling to Jerusalem prior to His final Passover. While on their journey they saw a fig tree which, from a distance, looked healthy. But, as they drew closer and examined it carefully, they "found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs" (Mark 11:12-14). Even though it was early spring and figs would not normally appear until June, they couldn't even find any early, edible buds. *The New Bible Commentary—Revised* states, "the fig tree in Palestine bears an early crop of immature fruit, like green knobs, which appear before the leaves. These are known as *taksh* and are the common food of the peasants. Absence was clear indication of the barrenness of the tree" (p. 875).

Although there should have been some physical evidence that fruit would develop later, Jesus discerned that the tree was not capable of doing so. Therefore He said, "let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (verse 14). The next day, when the disciples again passed by the fig tree, they saw that it had shriveled up and died (verse 20-21).

When we consider the above biblical illustrations, several questions can arise. Is it perhaps conceivable that we could be mostly "show," like the Pharisees and the fig tree, with little or no evidence of genuine spiritual fruit? When Jesus looks for bona fide, divine growth in you and me could He be disappointed? We may have *outward* signs of faithfulness such as attending Sabbath and Holy Day services, tithing, giving offerings and not eating unclean foods. But is there evidence of a *real, internal spiritual transformation* taking place or are our actions merely superficial without genuine substance?

In answering these questions, it would be important for us to look carefully and objectively at our lives. The apostle Paul wrote, "*Examine yourselves* to see whether you are in the faith; *test yourselves*. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5, New International Version). Also, as Galatians 6:4 says, "But let each one *examine his own work*, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." To determine our true spiritual condition we must, with God's dynamic help, give ourselves a thorough spiritual "check-up." For instance, in a deeply heartfelt prayer, King David said, "Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts" (Psalm 139:23, Today's English Version).

### Looking into God's spiritual mirror

In this vital responsibility of self-analysis, we need to be proactive. This requires viewing ourselves in a special *divine* mirror which is capable of showing us if we might have an inaccurate spiritual image of ourselves. In the first chapter of the book of James, the apostle conveys a brief story about a man who looked at his face in a *physical* mirror and then, after going on his way, quickly forgot what he looked like. Was his face perhaps dirty and blemished? Was he unkempt and disheveled? Although the story doesn't say, James continues by focusing on what could be described as God's *spiritual* mirror. "But he who *looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

In a parallel passage, King David described God's law as being *perfect* (Psalm 19:7). In addition, he wrote, "And I will walk at *liberty*, for I sought thy commandments" (Psalms 119:45, Jubilee Bible). Where are God's commandments made plain? In the Bible! So, when we squarely compare our thoughts, words and actions with God's perfect law outlined in Scripture, we can better assess our personal spiritu-

Luke Leung/Unsplash



We may have outward signs of faithfulness, but is there evidence of a real, internal spiritual transformation taking place?

al image and then take steps to make any necessary changes (Psalm 18:30). "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Hebrews 4:12, see also Psalm 19:7 and 2 Timothy 2:15).

Why is it so important that we meticulously examine ourselves for sin? Because it is very easy to break God's law if we are not careful. The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote that sin "so easily ensnares us" (Hebrews 12:1). He also said, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*" (Romans 7:23). Furthermore, he wrote, "The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are always fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should" (Galatians 5:17, Contemporary English Version).

### Reflecting the perfect image of God

So, as we study and apply God's Word, we must deal head-on with our natural, human tendencies. And, we can only see and overcome any deceptive elements in our nature by asking God in prayer and, through Bible study, to open our eyes in order to really grasp our true spiritual condition. As the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread expressly point out, we need to see ourselves accurately in order to expel sin from our lives and accomplish Jesus Christ's goal for us, which is to "be perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

So, let's look diligently into God's spiritual mirror to discover the true image we should be reflecting. As we grow in grace, knowledge and understanding (2 Peter 3:18), we should see less and less of our old selves, and more and more of God's true image in our lives. While this is a lifetime responsibility, eventually, at Jesus' second coming, we will fully reflect the *perfect* mirror image of our Father and be welcomed into His glorious Kingdom and family! **GN**

## Roku App Advertising Results

We are running advertising campaigns on Roku devices in the U.S.A. based on impressions by the thousand, or CPM. A variety of designs and program graphics appear.

After five years of advertising that began on Nov. 26, 2016, we are seeing the following cumulative results through Nov. 20, 2021:

- 39.71 million advertising impressions (25 percent increase over last November).
- 360,756 advertising clicks (14 percent increase over last November).
- 278,040 channel installs (15 percent increase over last November).
- 768,253 unique viewers (18 percent increase over last

November).

- 1,050,707 channel sessions (18 percent increase over last November).
- 562,503 sessions by returning viewers (21 percent increase over last November).
- 488,204 sessions by new viewers (13 percent increase over last November).
- 953,470 videos watched (12 percent increase over last November).
- 39.14 average minutes on channel (15 percent increase over last November) [59.45 average minutes on channel for the past six months].
- Our cost per advertising impression is 1.5 cents (17 percent less than a year ago).

We currently have 25,000 ads running per day and 257 videos being watched per day during the past six months.

Please note, these advertising impressions and clicks are only for Roku.

We are also running *Beyond Today* television programming on Amazon Fire TV, Samsung smart TVs, LG smart TVs, iOS devices and Android devices.

Streaming our *Beyond Today* television products on these devices is another type of TV “broadcasting.”

While we spend money on regular cable, satellite and broadcast airing of our TV program on channels like Newsmax TV, we must also appreciate the growing world of streaming television.

## Roku Still Leads Connected TV Device Market

Why do we place importance on our Roku advertising for *Beyond Today* television programming? According to eMarketer, U.S. Roku monthly users will increase by 11.5 percent, reaching 111.7 million monthly users. With these figures, Roku maintains its position as the most-used connected TV (CTV) device in the U.S. market, though Amazon Fire TV is catching up.

- Roku users now make up a third of the U.S. population.
- Despite strong performance, Roku will slow down over the next few years as the U.S. market becomes more saturated.
- While Roku has already crossed the 100 million users mark, Amazon Fire TV will

see growth of 15.4 percent in 2021, reaching 97 million monthly active users. Amazon will likely surpass 100 million users next year.

- Roku remains the top CTV platform in the U.S., accounting for 51.7 percent of CTV users. But Amazon Fire TV is much closer now with a penetration rate of nearly 45 percent among CTV users. Apple TV's penetration is pretty low compared with the rest, at only 13.1 percent of U.S. CTV users.

Please continue to pray for the success of all of our various streaming efforts to do our part in preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

*Peter Eddington*

## Local Church News

*Continued from page 2*

### Wisconsin Congregation Holds Congratulation Ceremony for New U.S. Citizen and Family



BELOIT, WISCONSIN—Baw Htoo's new U.S. citizenship, as told by Baw Htoo and his family: “In 1998, we left Burma [now called Myanmar] as Burma's civil war struck our village. Our village was burned. Our *Karen* people were tortured and killed. With this happening, my family had to flee to a refugee camp on the border of Thailand.

“In 2000, we learned the Bible from Margaret Hla Htoo. In 2003, we were baptized by minister Leon Sexton in Thailand. Our Bible knowledge continued after our baptism through Mr. Rayon Foster. He often came to our home in the Thailand refugee camp teaching us the Bible.

“In June of 2010, our family was able to come to the United States through the United Nations recruiting and the U.S. government sponsoring us.

“We lived in Salem, Oregon, for eight years. We moved from Oregon to Rockford, Illinois, in 2018. We decided on this move because *Karen* people lived in

Rockford, and they spoke our native language. Also, the cost of housing was more affordable for us in Rockford, Illinois.”

In 2020, Baw, the husband of Paw, with their four daughters, applied for U.S. citizenship. Due to COVID-19, this process took a year to complete instead of the usual six months. The process to be a citizen includes performing a biometric (taking Baw's fingerprints). Baw was given information about how our country works as a government. He learned about American history and law and was tested extensively on this information. Upon passing this test for U.S. citizenship Baw was included in a ceremony where he took the oath to be a U.S. citizen in July 2021.

To honor Baw's being a citizen, the Beloit, Wisconsin, congregation held a “welcome as a U.S. citizen social” in his honor. Baw was presented with a U.S. portfolio to contain his citizenship certificate. He also received a special card signed by the con-



*Left: The Htoo family with late pastor Randy D'Alessandro. Above: Certificate holder given to Baw Htoo.*

gregation and a lapel pin with embossed inscription reading “Proud To Be An American.” This pin was presented to Baw by the late Mr. D'Alessandro, pastor of Beloit at the time. Corsages and a boutonniere were given to the family as well.

It was not lost on all the Beloit brethren how encouraged the Htoo family was, joyfully remembering also the new citizenship in heaven that is for all of God's people everywhere: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21).

Baw's goal has been to have “a better life and future for my wife, my children, and myself in the United States.”

*Corinne Morrison*

### California Congregation Thanks Seiglies for 20 Years of Service



*The congregation honored Mario and Caty Seiglie with an engraved clock, photos, notes of appreciation and a cake.*

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA—The congregation pulled off a surprise celebration after Sabbath services on Nov. 20 to honor longtime pastor and wife Mario and Caty Seiglie for their 20 years of dedicated service to the congregation.

After comments and tributes by the elders and wives, the Seiglies were presented a beautiful clock engraved to note the occasion. An artistic member also

compiled a custom card filled with photo mementos of the Seiglies' service to the congregation, along with notes of appreciation in the card from our members. Afterwards the group enjoyed a delicious and custom decorated cake to honor Mario's and Caty's 20-year service.

The Seiglies expressed their appreciation for these tokens from the congregation.

*Jean Updegraff*

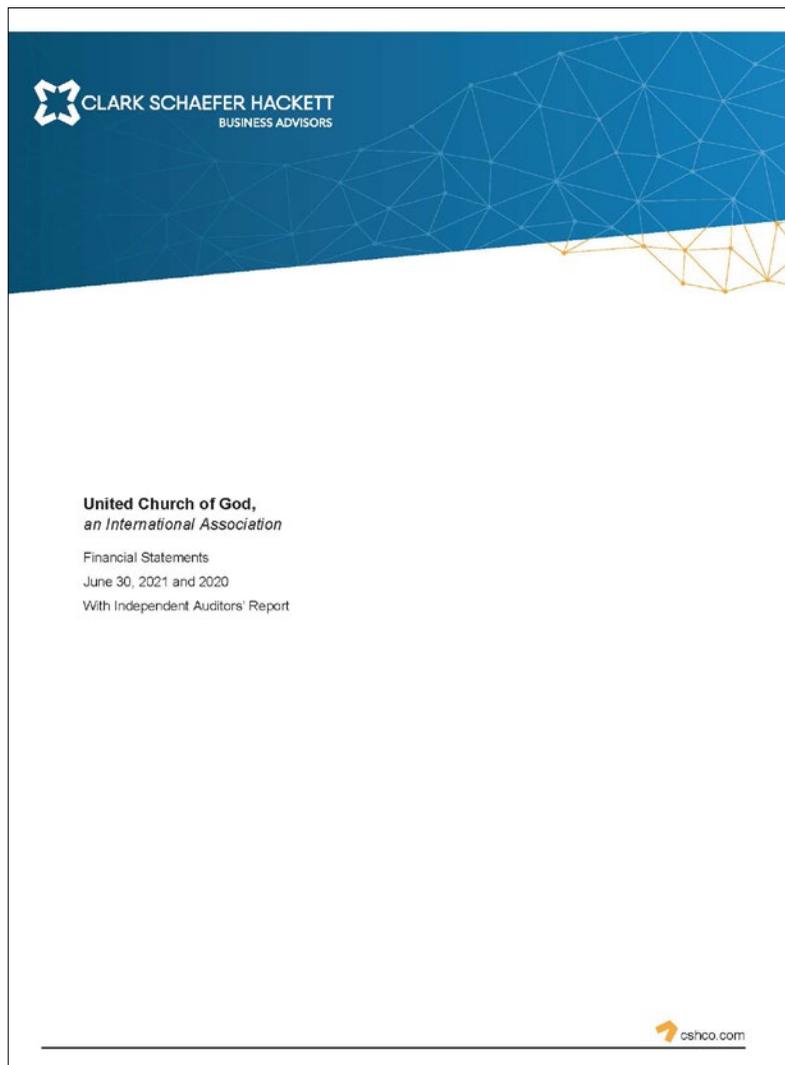


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Fiscal year 2021 was another good year for UCGia.

The external auditor's report for the fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2021, is presented in its entirety in the pages that follow.

Fiscal 2021 was another outstanding year, income-wise, for the Church, as God continues to pour His blessings out on us. Income for the year exceeded budget and prior year amounts, while expenses in this COVID-19-defined year were under budget, resulting in a sizable net income for the Church.

Notable transactions during the fiscal year 2021 include the purchase by UCGia of church buildings in the Kingsport, Tennessee; Freeland, Michigan; and Tulsa, Oklahoma, areas.

As this is written, we are just

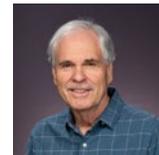
about halfway through fiscal 2022. Income and Holy Day offerings continue to exceed budget and prior year levels.

Along with the usual costs of congregational care, preaching and publishing the gospel, the Church is undertaking a complete revision of the [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) website. This process will take several months and is being done at significant cost, but the end result will be a more up-to-date and user-friendly website that will be a benefit to members and those seeking the truth of God.

As mentioned before, our

thanks are to God and the faithful members and individuals who support His Work with the resources He has provided. Together with us at the home office, please join us in asking God to direct our paths and order our steps as we seek His will in doing every aspect of His Work.

The following audited financial statements and notes provide much detail and explanation of the Church's financial processes, so please take the time to look the report over. Feel free to write with any questions you may have. **UN**



*Rick Shabi is the treasurer for United Church of God. Ordained an elder in 2000, he pastors congregations in Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida. He can be reached at [rick\\_shabi@ucg.org](mailto:rick_shabi@ucg.org).*



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

Council of Elders  
United Church of God, an International Association:

### Report on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of **United Church of God, an International Association** (a not-for-profit organization), which comprise the statements of financial position as of June 30, 2021 and 2020, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

### Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

**Opinion**

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of **United Church of God, an International Association**, as of June 30, 2021 and 2020, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

*Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co.*

Cincinnati, Ohio  
November 16, 2021

**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association**  
Statements of Financial Position  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
<b>Assets:</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 11,365,176	7,422,278
Certificates of deposit	517,701	1,524,025
Prepaid expenses	195,493	335,425
Property and equipment, net	<u>6,881,211</u>	<u>6,411,916</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ <u>18,959,581</u></b>	<b><u>15,693,644</u></b>
<b>Liabilities and net assets:</b>		
<b>Liabilities:</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 160,399	132,596
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	575,434	540,385
Accrued insurance obligations	47,801	9,057
Accrued other	104,401	207,875
Mortgages payable	<u>696,712</u>	<u>820,197</u>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b><u>1,584,747</u></b>	<b><u>1,710,110</u></b>
<b>Net assets:</b>		
<b>Without donor restrictions:</b>		
Undesignated	16,425,012	13,677,362
Designated by Council of Elders for healthcare reserve	<u>500,000</u>	<u>-</u>
	16,925,012	13,677,362
<b>With donor restrictions</b>	<b><u>449,822</u></b>	<b><u>306,172</u></b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b><u>17,374,834</u></b>	<b><u>13,983,534</u></b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ <u>18,959,581</u></b>	<b><u>15,693,644</u></b>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association**  
Statements of Activities  
Years Ended June 30, 2021 and 2020

	2021	2020
Net assets without donor restrictions:		
Revenues, gains and other support:		
Contributions - individuals	\$ 14,695,563	13,685,335
Contributions - local congregations	536,592	378,716
Holy day offerings and festival fund contributions	5,706,183	4,992,811
Estate and personal property donations	460,464	817,535
Gain on forgiveness of debt	-	39,839
Interest income	19,372	94,377
Other income	131,101	148,177
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	70,604	211,188
Total revenues, gains and other support	<u>21,619,879</u>	<u>20,367,978</u>
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Field Ministry / Local Congregations	7,724,286	8,075,675
Festivals	289,650	394,839
International	1,424,577	1,563,383
Public Proclamation	5,186,671	5,206,150
Total program services	<u>14,625,184</u>	<u>15,240,047</u>
Management and general:		
Council of Elders / Home Office / Insurance & Benefit Plans	3,454,940	3,477,997
General Conference	12,105	16,587
Executive Reserve	280,000	302,741
Total management and general	<u>3,747,045</u>	<u>3,797,325</u>
Total expenses	<u>18,372,229</u>	<u>19,037,372</u>
Increase in net assets without donor restrictions	<u>3,247,650</u>	<u>1,330,606</u>
Net assets with donor restrictions:		
Contributions	214,254	263,347
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	(70,604)	(211,188)
Increase in net assets with donor restrictions	<u>143,650</u>	<u>52,159</u>
Change in net assets	<u>3,391,300</u>	<u>1,382,765</u>
Net assets at the beginning of period	13,983,534	12,600,769
Net assets at the end of period	<u>\$ 17,374,834</u>	<u>13,983,534</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.  
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**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association**  
Statement of Functional Expenses  
Year Ended June 30, 2021

	Program Services				Management and General			Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	Executive Reserve	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 4,479,918	-	-	1,504,125	1,167,768	280,000	-	7,431,811
Contracted services and fees	40,006	105	-	352,500	296,296	-	6,248	895,155
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	1,194,230	-	-	-	1,194,230
Print media and advertising	4,372	7,429	-	763,858	23,569	-	1,632	800,860
Postage and shipping	17,048	3,486	-	1,031,281	15,109	-	2,104	1,099,028
Lease and rental expense	23,859	157,984	-	1,673	812	-	-	184,408
Telephone and utilities	31,720	1,545	-	2,525	109,596	-	-	145,386
Supplies	24,332	19,057	-	15,825	46,163	-	1,971	107,448
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	770,553	2,529	43,139	9,806	17,753	-	-	843,780
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	271,782	-	-	271,782
Grants and charitable support:								
International support:	-	-	1,381,438	305,279	1,155	-	-	1,687,872
Domestic support:								
Assistance to the needy	940,330	97,276	-	-	14,267	-	-	1,051,873
Allocations to local congregations	1,378,571	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,378,571
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,467,204	-	-	1,467,204
Other	13,577	259	-	5,666	23,366	-	150	43,021
Total expenses	<u>\$ 7,724,286</u>	<u>289,650</u>	<u>1,424,577</u>	<u>5,186,671</u>	<u>3,454,940</u>	<u>280,000</u>	<u>12,105</u>	<u>18,372,229</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.  
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**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association**  
Statement of Functional Expenses  
Year Ended June 30, 2020

	Program Services				Management and General			Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	Executive Reserve	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 4,466,208	-	-	1,862,370	1,104,603	293,600	-	7,526,781
Contracted services and fees	22,734	4,572	-	275,193	277,691	-	7,925	588,115
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	1,193,364	-	-	-	1,193,364
Print media and advertising	15,558	16,792	-	805,334	19,739	-	706	858,129
Postage and shipping	18,566	7,799	-	925,351	21,514	-	3,160	976,390
Lease and rental expense	16,907	170,162	-	3,539	727	-	500	191,835
Telephone and utilities	34,309	1,235	-	3,668	113,166	-	-	152,378
Supplies	29,182	12,407	-	17,394	58,672	-	2,584	120,239
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	888,366	29,747	122,044	6,918	60,181	9,141	1,262	1,117,659
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	250,488	-	-	250,488
Grants and charitable support:								
International support:	-	-	1,441,339	311,790	644	-	-	1,753,773
Domestic support:								
Assistance to the needy	946,051	151,720	-	-	20,339	-	-	1,118,110
Allocations to local congregations	1,603,814	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,603,814
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,520,164	-	-	1,520,164
Other	33,980	405	-	1,229	30,069	-	450	66,133
Total expenses	<u>\$ 8,075,675</u>	<u>394,839</u>	<u>1,563,383</u>	<u>5,206,150</u>	<u>3,477,997</u>	<u>302,741</u>	<u>16,587</u>	<u>19,037,372</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.  
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**UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association**  
Statements of Cash Flows  
Years Ended June 30, 2021 and 2020

	2021	2020
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 3,391,300	1,382,765
Adjustment to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation	271,782	250,488
Contributed property and equipment	-	(400,740)
Gain on forgiveness of debt	-	(39,839)
Effect of change in operating assets and liabilities:		
Prepaid expenses	139,932	50,860
Accounts payable	27,803	(67,405)
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	35,049	(20,582)
Accrued insurance obligations	38,744	(19,423)
Accrued other	(103,474)	96,945
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>3,801,136</u>	<u>1,233,069</u>
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchase of certificates of deposit	(517,701)	(1,524,025)
Redemption of certificates of deposit	1,524,025	2,554,912
Purchases of property and equipment	(741,077)	(944,358)
Net cash provided by investing activities	<u>265,247</u>	<u>86,529</u>
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Proceeds from mortgages payable	-	370,000
Principal payments on mortgages payable	(123,485)	(101,871)
Net cash provided (used) by financing activities	<u>(123,485)</u>	<u>268,129</u>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	<u>3,942,898</u>	<u>1,587,727</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>7,422,278</u>	<u>5,834,551</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	<u>\$ 11,365,176</u>	<u>7,422,278</u>
<b>Supplemental Cash Flow Disclosures:</b>		
Interest paid	<u>\$ 16,278</u>	<u>11,207</u>
<b>Supplemental disclosure of non cash transaction:</b>		
Forgiveness of debt	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>39,839</u>
Donation of building	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>400,740</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.  
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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

1. CHURCH AND ACTIVITIES:

The United Church of God, *an International Association*, (herein referred as the "Church") is a worldwide religious association. In the United States of America, the Church is a California Nonprofit Religious Corporation (incorporated on May 10, 1995). Affairs of the Church are coordinated through the Home Office located in Milford, Ohio, where the state of Ohio has the Church officially registered.

The Church is not affiliated with other religious churches, nor does it publicly appeal for funds or involve itself in politics. The mission of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples.

The Church is overseen by a General Conference of Elders, which, in turn, appoints a 12-member Council of Elders to function as a board of directors that establishes operational policies for the Church. The officers and employees of the Church are responsible for operation of the Church in conformance with Council policies.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES:

Basis of presentation

The accompanying financial statements include only the activity of the Home Office for the Church.

The Church has associated organizations, operating in other countries, which have resources that are principally derived and expended locally. The Church provides grants-in-aid and other services to some of these organizations. The accounts of these organizations are not included in the accompanying financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis in accordance with the AICPA Audit and Accounting Guide, "Not-for-Profit Organizations" which requires the Church to report information regarding its financial position and activities according to the following net asset classifications:

- Net assets without donor restrictions: Net assets that are not subject to donor-imposed restrictions and may be expended for any purpose in performing the primary objectives of the Church. These net assets may be used at the discretion of the Church's management and the Council of Elders.
- Net assets with donor restrictions: Net assets subject to stipulations imposed by donors. Some donor restrictions are temporary in nature; those restrictions will likely be met by actions of the Church or by the passage of time. Other donor restrictions are perpetual in nature, whereby the donor has stipulated the funds be maintained in perpetuity. The Church has no net assets with perpetual donor restrictions as of June 30, 2021 and 2020.

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

Church support

Members of the Church practice tithing (which is the donation of ten percent of one's "net" income for the Church's unrestricted use). The majority of the Church's support and revenue consist of such unrestricted donations, whether from individuals directly to the Home Office or from monies received by local congregations and subsequently given to the Home Office.

Members also save an additional ten percent of their annual "net" income for personal use in attending biblically mandated festivals or holy days. This is commonly referred to as the second tithe. Members also contribute to the Church a portion of the second tithe that they save for use at the annual festivals. These contributions, known as the "Festival Fund," are used to pay for expenses involved in festival operations and to assist needy members and their families so they can attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Funds are also sent internationally to assist members.

Those members who are financially able contribute to the "Assistance Fund." Monies contributed to the fund are used to assist the needy.

Members may designate that their contributions be used to support the Church internationally. This fund is known as the "International Fund."

Use of estimates

The financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles which require management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts of assets and liabilities, the disclosure of contingent liabilities as of the financial statement date, and the amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Income taxes

The Church is exempt from Federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donations to the Church are tax-deductible under IRC Section 170(b)(1)(A). However, income from certain activities not directly related to the Church's tax-exempt purpose would be subject to taxation as unrelated business income. The Church has been granted tax-exempt status in the states in which it operates that provide exemptions from taxes.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash and investments with initial maturities of three months or less.

Certificates of deposit

As of June 30, 2021 and 2020, the Church owned various certificates of deposit at various financial institutions. The certificates of deposit had an initial maturity of one year. The cost of the certificates of deposit were \$517,701 and \$1,524,025 at June 30, 2021 and 2020, respectively.

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

Concentration of credit risk

The Church maintains its cash and certificates of deposit at several commercial and savings banks which, at times, exceed federally insured limits. The Church has not experienced any losses in such accounts and believes it is not exposed to any significant credit risk.

Property and equipment

Purchased property and equipment are recorded at cost. Donations of property and equipment are recorded as support at their estimated fair value on the date of donation. Such donations are reported as without donor restrictions unless the donor has restricted the donated asset to be used for a specific purpose. Major improvements to real property are capitalized and normal repair and maintenance costs are expensed as incurred.

Property and equipment owned by the Church are depreciated using the straight-line method over their estimated useful life as follows:

Computer/Information Systems	3 years
Office Equipment	5 years
Vehicles	5 years
Office Furniture and Fixtures	7 years
Land Improvements	10 years
Buildings	40 years

Components of programs and supporting services

Field Ministry/Local Congregations: This function includes expenses pertaining to the field ministry, local congregations and youth camps.

International: This function includes expenses pertaining to the support of international congregations and offices.

Public Proclamation: This area contains all media related expenses.

Festivals: This function includes costs that are directly involved in the fall Festival of Tabernacles and the other annual festivals.

Home Office: This function includes administrative and other expenses for the Home Office.

Council of Elders: The expenses in this function are those that pertain to the Council of Elders, including phone and face-to-face conferences.

General Conference: Expenses in this function include any expenses relating to the Cincinnati, Ohio, General Conference held in May.

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

Executive Reserve: This function includes funds set aside for special projects, capital expenditures, employee benefits, or other unforeseen expenditures that may occur during the year.

Allocation of functional expenses

The costs of providing various programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the statements of activities and, accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among benefited programs and supporting services. There are no joint costs for fundraising activities. All expenses are charged to the various programs and other activities based on direct expenses incurred with exception of the following functional expense categories which include allocated expenses based on periodic time studies conducted by management: salaries, contracted services, print media and advertising, building and equipment lease/rental, occupancy, travel, supportive services, and other expenses.

Subsequent events

The Church evaluates events and transactions occurring subsequent to the date of the financial statements for matters requiring recognition or disclosure in the financial statements. The accompanying financial statements consider events through November 16, 2021, the date on which the financial statements were available to be issued.

The COVID-19 outbreak in the United States has caused business disruption. The extent of the impact of COVID-19 on the Church's operational and financial performance will depend on certain developments, including the duration and spread of the outbreak. Impact on the Church's employees, vendors and operations cannot be predicted, and the extent to which COVID-19 may impact the Church's financial condition or results of operations is uncertain at this time.

Reclassifications

Certain items from 2020 have been reclassified to conform to the current year presentation.

3. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT:

Property and equipment consisted of the following at June 30:

	2021	2020
Buildings and construction in progress	\$ 8,345,057	7,656,562
Land	449,952	449,952
Land improvements	421,541	421,541
Furniture and fixtures	97,092	97,092
Office equipment	668,996	682,491
Vehicles	69,494	69,494
Total property and equipment	10,052,132	9,377,132
Less: accumulated depreciation	3,170,921	2,985,216
	<u>\$ 6,881,211</u>	<u>6,411,916</u>

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

**4. OBLIGATIONS UNDER OPERATING LEASES:**

The Church leases automobiles pursuant to operating lease agreements. The Church's future minimum lease payments for all non-cancelable operating leases are as follows:

Years Ending June 30:

2022	\$ 87,400
2023	39,919
2024	7,601
2025	<u>1,483</u>

Total future minimum lease payments \$ 136,403

Rent and lease expenses for the years ended June 30, 2021 and 2020 were \$361,450 and \$398,953, respectively.

**5. DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PENSION PLAN:**

Effective April 1, 1999 the Church established a 403(b) thrift plan for all full-time employees. Matching contributions were made for the years ended June 30, 2021 and 2020 in the amount of \$209,129 and \$198,709, respectively.

**6. MORTGAGES PAYABLE:**

In November 2008, the Church signed a \$350,000 mortgage with Prosperity Bank, secured by a church building. The mortgage was to be repaid in monthly installments over fifteen years, with an interest rate at 6.526%. In June 2014, the note with Prosperity Bank was refinanced and a new mortgage was issued through a member of the Church. The new note has a principal amount of \$260,000 and will be repaid in monthly installments over 8 years, with an interest rate of 3.00%. The balance at June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$36,009 and \$70,955, respectively.

In June 2014, the Church signed a \$65,000 mortgage with Church of Christ, secured by a church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 8 years, with an interest rate of 0.00%. The balance at June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$8,976 and \$16,550, respectively. No interest has been imputed on the mortgage, as the amount was deemed immaterial.

In December 2014, the Church signed a \$25,000 mortgage with United Church of God, Fort Wayne, secured by a church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 10 years, with an interest rate of 0.50%. The balance at June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$8,893 and \$11,405 respectively.

In 2010, the Church received a building as part of a contribution that included an assumed mortgage with a balance of \$151,000 at the time of contribution. The mortgage is secured by the church building. The mortgage will be repaid in 215 monthly installments of \$700 and one payment of \$500 maturing in December 2029, with an interest rate of 0.00%. The balance at

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$62,800 and \$71,200, respectively. No interest has been imputed on the mortgage, as the amount was deemed immaterial.

In August 2018, the Church received a building as part of a contribution that included a \$345,000 mortgage with three members of the United Church of God, Columbus, secured by the church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 15 years, with an interest rate of 0.00%. The balance at June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$279,833 and \$302,833, respectively. No interest has been imputed on the mortgage, as the amount was deemed immaterial.

In December 2019, the Church purchased a building utilizing funds donated from the United Church of God, Indianapolis along with funds obtained through a \$370,000 mortgage with First Financial Bank, secured by the church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 15 years, with an interest rate of 4.5%. The balance at June 30, 2021 and 2020 was \$300,201 and \$347,254, respectively.

The future minimum payments on the mortgage payables are as follows:

Years Ending June 30:

2022	\$ 127,274
2023	85,413
2024	87,790
2025	88,993
2026	90,301
Thereafter	<u>216,941</u>
Total	\$ <u>696,712</u>

**7. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES:**

The Church is currently making discretionary payments to certain individuals. The payments totaled approximately \$1,052,000 and \$946,000 for the years ended June 30, 2021 and 2020, respectively. These discretionary payments are provided, in part, based upon the individual's needs and, accordingly, could be discontinued in the future. No amounts have been accrued in the accompanying financial statements for future payments relating to these arrangements. The Church is self-insured for medical insurance and maintains a stop-loss coverage policy covering individual claims in excess of predetermined amounts. Aggregate annual claims are also capped at a fixed rate. Self-insurance costs are accrued based upon the aggregate of the liability for reported claims and an estimated liability for claims incurred but not reported.

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

**8. NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS:**

Net assets with donor restrictions are available for the following purposes at June 30:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Studio Fund	\$ 7,602	5,367
Good Works Program	392,027	255,090
Building Fund	<u>50,193</u>	<u>45,715</u>
	\$ <u>449,822</u>	<u>306,172</u>

Net assets of \$70,604 were released during 2021 from donor restrictions by incurring capital expenditures satisfying the restricted purposes of funds held within the Studio Fund and by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes specified by the donors within the Good Works Program. Net assets of \$211,188 were released during 2020 from donor restrictions by incurring capital expenditures satisfying the restricted purposes of funds held within the Building Fund and by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes specified by the donors within the Good Works Program.

**9. LIQUIDITY DISCLOSURE:**

The Church is substantially supported by contributions from its members. A majority of these contributions are recorded without donor restrictions; however, the Church does receive contributions that are recorded with donor restrictions. Because a donor's restriction requires resources to be used in a particular manner or in a future period, the Church must maintain sufficient resources to meet those responsibilities to its donors. Thus, financial assets may not be available for general expenditure within one year.

The following table reflects the Church's financial assets as of June 30, 2021 and 2020, reduced by amounts that are not available to meet general expenditures within one year of the statements of financial position date because of donor restrictions:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Financial assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 11,613,679	7,422,278
Certificates of deposit	<u>269,198</u>	<u>1,524,025</u>
Financial assets available at year-end	<u>11,882,877</u>	<u>8,946,303</u>
Less those unavailable for general expenditures within one year due to:		
Restricted by donor for specific purpose	<u>449,822</u>	<u>306,172</u>
Financial assets available to meet cash needs for general expenditures within one year	\$ <u>11,433,055</u>	<u>8,640,131</u>

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association  
Notes to the Financial Statements  
June 30, 2021 and 2020

**10. NEW ACCOUNTING PRONOUNCEMENT:**

In February 2016, the FASB issued ASU No. 2016-02, "Leases". The standard requires all leases with lease terms over 12 months to be capitalized as a right-of-use asset and lease liability on the statement of financial position at the date of the lease commencement. Leases will be classified as either financing or operating. This distinction will be relevant for the pattern of expense recognition in the statement of activities. This standard will be effective for the year ending June 30, 2023.

The Church is currently in the process of evaluating the impact of this new standard on the financial statements.

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In January of 2011 the Cleveland, Ohio, congregation found itself needing a new meeting place. After a month of searching, we found and leased an office building. However, the owner sold the building three years later and our hunt began again! This time we were not having any success. So, we considered purchasing a building. We found a church building that had been vacant for over a year and was very reasonably priced. Mr. Kubik encouraged us to pursue it. It wasn't as centrally located, but upon seeking opinions from members, it only added 10 minutes of travel time from previous meeting places.

On Nov. 1, 2014, the Cleveland congregation took possession of our own church building in the village of Grafton, Ohio. We were excited to have a permanent home, and quickly recognized this building as a God-given blessing on many levels.

First, we no longer had to set up, take down and store equipment each week. We could enjoy the Sabbath without the former heavy set-up work and planned activities when we wished. And

we had such privacy and space! There were several rooms in the building that were converted into a conference room, library, classrooms, nursery and playroom. A bonus was the picnic pavilion on the property.

The next level of blessing was the camaraderie that grew as we worked together to maintain our home. We did carpentry projects, yardwork, painted and remodeled—each using his or her special talents to make it our home. We got to know and appreciate one another in a whole new way. Having our own building also continues to give many brethren the opportunity to serve. Brethren rotate cleaning the building each week, and occasional work parties help us tackle “to-do” lists of improvements and maintenance.

On the third level, it helps us become a positive presence in our community. Our sign out front announces who we are, when we meet and invites folks to visit. We have shared our building with a local Girl Scout troop for monthly meetings, held food drives for a community food bank and made

fleece blankets for hospitalized children. We have communication with other churches in the local community and have done a couple of joint service projects with them.

On the fourth level, our home has been a benefit to furthering the aims of the United Church of God. We have hosted combined Holy Day services, an ABC Sampler, and invited the public to attend Kingdom of God seminars roughly every two years, providing a literature rack of church publications. Our home also serves the brethren by providing a place for weddings and memorial services.

With all we have done with our building over the last seven years, we have gotten to know and support one another, pray for one another's challenges and share one another's joys as we work toward fulfilling Jesus' commandment given in John 15:12 that we love one another. When we walk through that door each Sabbath, we have a feeling of being home—home among family.

*Diane Webber  
and BJ Thomas*



*Clockwise from top right: The Cleveland building in summer 2015; members taking care of landscape duties; members making fleece blankets for a local hospital; combined Holy Day services; members smile at an ice cream social.*



## Is your congregation involved in service or fundraising projects? Let us know!

We know many local congregations are working to serve their local community or support international projects!

The Good Works team is looking to highlight service initiatives that congregations are doing locally in addition to the major Good Works projects being funded and carried out all around the world. Send us an article and photos! Email Good Works Coordinator Lena VanAusdle at [lena\\_vanausdle@ucg.org](mailto:lena_vanausdle@ucg.org) for more information, or to submit a story.

### About Good Works...

Following the directive in Galatians 6:10 to “do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith,” the Good Works Program is intended to provide an organized way for brethren to help others (primarily those in the Church) who face unusual, emergency situations that could not be anticipated or budgeted for. The intent of the program is to make these situations known to the Church, and to coordinate the distribution of funds that are raised by individuals, congregations or groups in fundraising efforts.

We do not ask that tithes and offerings be directed to this program, for the reasons given above. Instead, if individuals, congregations, or groups within a congregation wish to engage in individual or special fundraising efforts (for example, car washes, garage sales, candy or fruit sales, etc.), the coordinator will see to it that they are then passed along to the appropriate designees.

Once sufficient funds for a particular project or need are received and passed along, that project will be marked complete.



Watch the Good Works video at [bit.ly/ucggoodworks!](http://bit.ly/ucggoodworks!)

*Lena VanAusdle*

# BEYOND TODAY

- Jan. 2-8 | **Smyrna: Faith Under Fire**  
Presented by Darris McNeely  
Literature offered: *You Can Have Living Faith*
- Jan. 9-15 | **Watch Out!**  
Presented by Steve Myers  
Literature offered: *What You Need to Know About Baptism*
- Jan. 16-22 | **You Become What You Think**  
Presented by Gary Petty  
Literature offered: *Tools for Spiritual Growth*
- Jan. 23-29 | **The Irrelevant Commandments**  
Presented by Steve Myers  
Literature offered: *The Ten Commandments*
- Jan. 30-  
Feb. 5 | **Is Jesus the Only Way?**  
Presented by Gary Petty  
Literature offered: *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*
- Feb. 6-12 | **Pergamos: Where Satan Dwells**  
Presented by Darris McNeely  
Literature offered: *Is There Really a Devil?*
- Feb. 13-19 | **Great Conspiracy**  
Presented by Steve Myers  
Literature offered: *Who Is the Antichrist?*
- Feb. 20-26 | **Questions God Asks You**  
Presented by Gary Petty  
Literature offered: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*
- Feb. 27-  
March 5 | **The Sabbath Rest: Beating the Tyranny of Tech**  
Presented by Darris McNeely  
Literature offered: *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*



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

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## Choosing Your Executor/Trustee

In recent planned giving articles in *United News*, we have suggested that having a Will or Trust will simplify the process of transferring what we have accumulated during our lives to our beneficiaries after our deaths in an orderly way.

When establishing and reviewing our Will or Trust documents, it is important to consider who is or will be taking care of our estate when we are unable to do so.

### How do you choose an executor/trustee?

What is an executor (also known as a trustee)? It's the person you appoint to carry out your Will or Trust. The executor/trustee, sometimes called an estate representative, is responsible for managing your estate from the time of death until everything you own is distributed. It's a time-consuming job and one that requires making complex financial and at times emotional decisions.

Can everybody perform the duties that are needed? Here are some characteristics to consider.

Is the person you choose to settle your estate well organized and capable of handling financial matters? They should also have good communication and research skills, and should be valued by your heirs as someone who is trustworthy and diplomatic. Often people decide a spouse, sibling, child or close friend will be the best choice.

When you have made your choice based on the capability of the potential executor, having an executor in the same locality and state can be helpful. Court appearances, property issues and even checking mail can be simplified by proximity.

Your executor or trustee will have a legal responsibility to:

- Go through your home, find possessions and identify assets and debts
- Open an estate checking account
- Probate the Will (if applicable)
- Liquidate assets as directed by the Will or Trust (if applicable)
- Look at all your financial statements, pay bills and taxes
- Notify beneficiaries of their interest in the estate
- Apply for your life insurance and/or employee benefits
- Distribute bequests to heirs
- Close the estate account

Whomever you choose, discuss your decision with that person. Make sure the individual understands and accepts the obligation—and knows where you keep important records. Because the person may pre-decease you—or have a change of heart about executing your wishes—it's always a good idea to name one or two alternative or successor executors, just in case the first person is unwilling or unable to serve.

If your estate is complex or trusted family and friends are not available due to ability or physical limitations, the option to use professional trust services is available. These businesses will charge a fee, which would be paid by the estate. In some families, singling out one child or sibling as executor could be construed as favoritism, so naming an outside party may be a good alternative.

The period following the death of a loved one is a stressful time and can be confusing for family members. Choosing the right executor or trustee can help ensure that the distribution of your assets may be done efficiently and with as little upheaval as possible. Remember that your executor/trustee will have a fiduciary responsibility to protect the assets of your estate. Be sure you select your executor/trustee wisely.

For more information, please contact our Planned Giving Coordinator, Howard Marchbanks, CFP®.

Phone: (513) 570-2343

Email: [plannedgiving@ucg.org](mailto:plannedgiving@ucg.org)

Online: [ucg.org/planned-giving](http://ucg.org/planned-giving) UN

### BY THE NUMBERS

# 59.45

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