



United Church of God *an International Association*

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

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Personal From the President...

With God There Are No Bad Neighborhoods

During my lifetime, like many of you, I have had the privilege of meeting remarkable people. As I have mentioned on occasion, one influential person in my life stands out: former Indiana First Lady Judy O'Bannon. Her husband, the late Frank O'Bannon, was governor of Indiana from 1997–2003.

She made one transformative comment to me that I have never forgotten. But before I get to that, allow me to relate how it came about.

I first met with her together with a noted Ukrainian pediatrician. The physician was engaged with helping children affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and, as a noted humanitarian herself, Mrs. O'Bannon wanted to meet him. As the meeting unfolded, she became intensely interested in what was being accomplished. Our tightly scheduled 20-minute private meeting in the Governor's Mansion quickly and unexpectedly stretched into a two-hour animated discussion.

As the meeting concluded, I received an unanticipated pleasant surprise. On the spot, she invited me to join her on a delegation of Indianapolis university educators, business professionals and religious and non-profit leaders. She was organizing this group to visit emerging Russian non-profits.

I quickly agreed, as I was already going to be in nearby Estonia for the Feast when they arrived.



Indiana First Lady Judy O'Bannon with Victor Kubik
in St. Petersburg, Russia.

I can rapidly translate Russian into English, so Mrs. O'Bannon kept me close by on the trip. Always inquisitive, she liked to break away and explore. So, together with her bodyguard, I often accompanied her to open-air markets, walks inside crowded local post offices and in informal talks with people on the street, and even beggars. She would ask many insightful questions, always engaging and caring.

After we returned, Mrs. O'Bannon asked me to help her with service projects. One was a wheelchair matching program that continues today as an ongoing LifeNets service. We also worked with orphans in Moldova. She brought children with severe medical hardships to Indianapolis to be treated at top local hospitals. She hosted a weekly local PBS television program called *Communities Building Community*, including one episode about LifeNets. Even though I am now living in the Cincinnati area, I still have contact with her to this day.

So, what did she say to me that I have never forgotten?

Once, while visiting her, I made an unthoughtful, even brash, comment. I inadvertently referred to some neighborhoods in Indianapolis as "bad."

Mrs. O'Bannon quickly and sharply reacted.

"In this house, you will never call any neighborhoods in this city 'bad,'" she scolded. "If people knew that that's the way I felt about where and how they live, that community would have absolutely no hope."

Her main point? "People need to look to leaders as those who hold out hope."

This encounter has stuck with me. Why? Because I know that God created humanity. I know that God is fully aware of how people in unfortunate circumstances live—and suffer—on this planet. My wife Bev and I have visited and worked with such people on multiple continents.

But, like you, I also know that He has a marvelously positive plan, one of powerful spiritual and physical redemption for *all*.

God never thinks of his creation as “bad.” He knows what the actual incredible human potential is for all!

God’s intentions represent far more than wishful thinking. But, as some look at humankind, it can appear that the majority do not have a chance and are doomed. Thanks be to God that they are not!

You and I can rejoice in the fact that we understand and know the answers to these titanic questions. We annually celebrate the final climactic Holy Day that pictures salvation for the vast majority of humanity that has lived through the ages. The good news, which I hope we never take for granted, is that all the people who have never heard or rejected Christ are not lost!

We know why there is so much suffering, inequity and injustice in the world. Like some of our young people, I had wondered about such things when I was a teen. When I first read the reprint article *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* (first published in 1958), it was an epiphany! It was one of the most beautiful and profound things I had ever read.

This was a personal tipping point of understanding. I knew then for certain that all the present suffering and evil that we see around us will be removed. A new world, a new heart, a new mindset *for all* is coming when Jesus Christ returns to the earth. This is the *good news* that we proclaim!

We must remember and understand that John 3:15-16 is indeed inclusive of the whole world: “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For *God so loved the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him *should not perish* but have everlasting life” (emphasis added throughout).

Far from thinking that people are “bad,” in chapter four of John, Jesus demonstrates how God assesses people and their potential.

Jesus was on His way from Judea to Galilee. Remarkably, He deliberately chose to travel through Samaria, the former capital of Israel, but now considered a “bad neighborhood” by the first century Jews.

Samaritans and Jews hated each other. As Jews traveled north, they would bypass Samaria to avoid contact. Centuries before, as a conquered people, ancient Israel absorbed Assyrian culture. They corrupted the worship of God with pagan sacrifices and noxious idolatry. The Samaritans also regularly and bitterly challenged the returning Jews from Babylon. There was certainly no love lost there.

Amazingly, in this emotionally charged environment, Jesus Christ chose to reveal Himself as the prophesied Messiah.

Resting at an ancient well in the city, Jesus engaged a woman in discussion. This was not just a Samaritan, but one who had a checkered family life, having been married five times. Of course, even talking to a strange woman was taboo. Jesus then asked her for a drink of water, contrasting it with spiritual water that would give her eternal life.

Astonishingly, Christ then revealed Himself as the Messiah to this woman: “The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you *am He*’” (John 4:25-26).

Our Savior and soon-coming King obviously didn’t consider this environment “a bad neighborhood.”

In Luke 10, we read the familiar story of a man who was robbed and beaten almost to death. Severely wounded and unconscious, he lay in a broken heap on the roadside. Jewish religious people walked by, purposely ignoring the injured man. The people who were supposed to be righteous did *nothing*.

After all, this was a “bad neighborhood.”

However, the story takes a different turn. A hated Samaritan took action, carrying this man to a place where he could recover. As Jesus explained, the Samaritan reached into his own pocket to pay expenses for the injured man. Did Jesus mention a “bad neighborhood”? No, Jesus taught that this lowly Samaritan *loved his neighbor as himself*, the second great commandment.

Let’s take a look at other biblical figures in this potentially “bad neighborhood” category:

In the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11, Rahab the harlot—formerly a practicing prostitute—is listed with Abraham, the father of the faithful. In fact, Rahab is related to Boaz, the husband of Ruth. She advanced from harlot to heroine and ended up in the direct lineage of Jesus Christ, the very Savior of humanity.

The evil people of Sodom are given hope by none other than Jesus Himself. Severely criticizing the people in Capernaum, Jesus declared: “I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you” (Matthew 11:23-24).

The apostle Paul regularly lamented that he, of all people, was not worthy to be an apostle, as he was formerly a persecutor and even a *murderer* of Christians. Paul ended up performing mighty works and became the most prolific author of the New Testament.

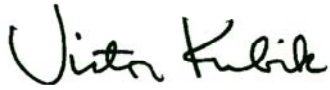
Far from discarding people from so-called “bad neighborhoods,” God will eventually equip all people with a new spirit, a new heart and a new mindset (Ezekiel 36:26).

In the days to come, *all people* will hold God’s marvelous promise: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

This is indeed the gospel we preach, the *good news*. It manifests God’s love for humanity.

As we interact with the world, let us profoundly remember: from God’s perspective, there are no bad neighborhoods. And with our lights shining brightly, let us all hold out hope to this suffering world!

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

From Ministerial and Member Services...

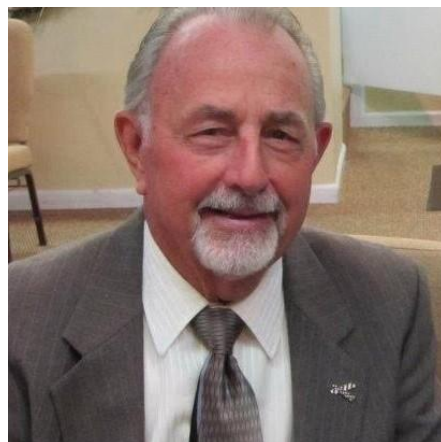
Recent Ordination



Tony and Elizabeth Stith

On Feb. 5, 2022, Tony Stith was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Elizabeth, serve in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, congregation.

Death of Dudley Trone



Dudley Trone

Longtime elder Dudley Trone died peacefully on Monday, Jan. 24. For the last few years, he had been battling cancer and dementia. His beloved wife of 69 years, Louise, was at his side, and he died at the house he built with his four sons, Denton, Dirk, Drew and Darren—a house situated in a tranquil, country setting, bordering a lake.

Dudley was baptized in 1962, ordained a deacon in 1965, and ordained an elder in 1969. He was a charter member of both the Bakersfield and San Jose congregations in California. He served for 13 years in the Bay Area until late 1975, when he moved the family to the beautiful foothills of Grass Valley, California. For nearly 40 years, Dudley faithfully served the Sacramento congregation.

As a song leader, one of Dudley's favorite hymns to sing was "Blest and Happy is the Man." This hymn, based on Psalm 1, aptly describes Dudley. As a pillar of faith, Dudley would "never walk astray." In 1962, because of his Sabbath observance, he lost his job with the phone company. However, God blessed him ("and all he does prospers well") with a successful custom home building company, working alongside his four sons. Dudley, a general contractor, gained a reputation for being an honest, hardworking and quality builder, and rarely had to advertise.

Dudley will be greatly missed, but we are comforted that this good and faithful servant has finished his race and is awaiting his crown. A graveside service to honor his memory will be held in late April.

Women's Services Update

A transition recently took place in the personnel of UCG Women's Services. This service area under the President's Office has been serving the needs of our ladies since 2011.

Coordination of Women's Services will be continued by co-leads Kay Schreiber from Colorado and Barbara Welch from Cincinnati. Both women have extensive experience in the pastoral ministry and have been active in programs relating to the interests of women. To round out the Women's Services team at this time, we have Kristina Fogelson from Phoenix and Lena VanAusdler from New York. Each team member brings unique experiences and skills.

The Women's Services mission statement is: "Encourage women to reach their God-given potential by providing support and biblically based resources." We will seek to fulfill the mission by:

- Honoring the calling by helping women appreciate their value and worth by God's design.
- Providing opportunities for women to connect with, encourage and support each other.
- Encouraging women to lovingly mentor and pass the truth of God on to the next generation.
- Using the Word of God as our foundation.

The team would like to share information about the resources that are currently available. Listed below are the links or information for the various programs for elders' wives.

Women of Valor Webpage: women.ucg.org is the place to go to check out current and past UCG Women's Weekends. We encourage you to check the webpage and perhaps attend a weekend in the future.

Circle of Care—online Zoom forum: Women's Services offers a quarterly online forum with specific discussion topics for elders' wives. Mark your calendar for our next Circle of Care meeting scheduled for March 28, 7:30 p.m., Eastern Time. Dr. Jeannette Gordon Reinoso, a UCG member in the Dallas congregation and licensed counseling psychologist will be our presenter. More information on this session will be published soon.

Connections Forum: This group email list was originally started to foster communication between elders' wives. Currently we have around 275 ladies on this group. Responses and content are kept confidential and are not shared outside this group. If you are not already a part of the Elders' Wives email Connections group, please contact us and we will get you set up.

Women's Education Resources: The [Ministerial Resource Site](#) has an Elders' Wives folder. We are in the process of adding a variety of resources (Women's Education study guides, suggested books, study notes from Circle of Care forums and other). Let us know what kinds of topics you might be interested in. We want this site to be a location to find relevant and helpful information.

General Conference of Elders (GCE): At this time, we are getting ready to focus our attention on the May 2022 GCE meeting and opportunities for ladies to have a breakout session and possibly other ways to connect with each other. We invite you to submit possible topics or activities that would be beneficial for attendees.

The Women's Services team looks forward to continuing the various women's activities that have been available these past many years. Please feel free to reach out to the team if you have questions, thoughts or ideas. Barbara Welch, Kay Schreiber, Kristina Fogelson and Lena VanAusdle very much look forward to supporting elders' wives and developing women's resources so that we can serve our respective congregations. There are many opportunities for you to be involved. We are here to serve.

—Barb Welch at barbara_welch@ucg.org or by phone (918) 724-4161

—Kay Schreiber at kay_schreiber@ucg.org or by phone (602) 909-8189

Why Ambassador Bible College?

The Epistles of Paul

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where the Word of God was misunderstood and misused? All too often the doctrine of God comes under attack from those who claim to be religious. When your faith is challenged, are you confident of your understanding of God's Word?

The apostle Peter wrote about this saying, "our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

When the truth is under attack, it is essential to know why you believe what you believe and have the ability to explain it. In many cases, as Peter wrote, it is Paul's writings that are misinterpreted.

This is one important reason to attend Ambassador Bible College. At ABC we take the opportunity to study Paul's letters, which are some of the most profound books ever written.



Steve Myers talks to the ABC class during this year's Orientation.

The Epistles of Paul class explores the historical and cultural background for each letter. Considerable time is taken to identify, examine and explain difficult sections of these books in order to clarify and expand understanding.

If you've ever wondered how Paul's teachings fit with the teachings of Jesus and the other apostles, this is the class for you! This course examines doctrines and practices as they were addressed among God's people in the first century Church and how it applies to us today. The overriding goal is to motivate students to not only understand but to recall and implement these principles in their personal lives.

If you've ever felt "twisted up" or had questions about something in Paul's writings, this class will help you gain a depth of spiritual understanding and the confidence to explain it. I pray you'll consider joining us at Ambassador Bible College.

—Steve Myers, faculty member, Ambassador Bible College

Inside United Podcast



Peter Eddington—Finding the Creator Through Science, Part 2

Will intelligent machines replace humans? What is micro-evolution? Why do the tectonic plates make Earth hospitable to life? Peter Eddington returns for part 2 of the discussion of this year's Conference on Science and Faith hosted by the Discovery Institute.

ucg.org/inside-united-podcast/inside-united-podcast-234-peter-eddington-finding-the-creator-through-science-part-2

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

Listen to past episodes: ucg.org/inside-united-podcast

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

Television Networks to Air *Beyond Today* Programs

The United Church of God is pleased to announce the addition of two television networks to air *Beyond Today* programs.

THE WORD Network

Beginning on Sunday, Feb. 6, *Beyond Today* will air each Sunday on *THE WORD Network* at 10:30 p.m. ET, 9:30 p.m. CT, 8:30 p.m. MT, 7:30 p.m. PT. *THE WORD Network* can be viewed in 93 million cable households in the United States. In addition, our programs can also be viewed in the United Kingdom on *Sky TV* in 9 million households. Furthermore, *Beyond Today* will be available to be seen in various countries in Latin America and by 1 million personnel in over 65 countries serving in the United States Armed Forces.

i24NEWS TV

Beginning Sunday, Feb. 13, the *i24NEWS TV* network will begin airing *Beyond Today* on Sundays at 8 a.m. ET, 7 a.m. CT, 6 a.m. MT, 5 a.m. PT. *i24NEWS TV* is an Israeli-based

international 24-hour news and current affairs network telecasting in English, French and Arabic. Its English-language version can be seen in 20 million U.S. cable households.

Your vital prayers for the success of these two additions to our *Beyond Today* television line-up would be gratefully appreciated.

—Peter Eddington, Operation Manager, Media and Communications Services

Job Opening: French Communications Analyst / Assistant Webmaster

The United Church of God has announced an opening for a full-time French Communications Analyst / Assistant Webmaster. The candidate will report to the senior pastor for French Speaking Europe and Africa, and coordinate projects with Media and Communications Services.

The candidate will be responsible for developing, analyzing and processing communications for the United Church of God in the French language. In consultation with Media and Communications Services, the successful candidate will recommend and implement key outgoing communications on the French Language website and on social media, as well as review incoming email communications (addressing where appropriate) and routing to the right individual if he/she cannot answer directly.

Specific job duties will include:

- Maintaining the *L'Église de Dieu Unie* (EDU) French language website, including the *Pour l'Avenir* (French edition *Beyond Today*) magazine in coordination with home office website personnel.
- Team lead of volunteer group to oversee and monitor the EDU Facebook and Instagram pages for regular posting.
- Regular posting into HTML to the Church website of new booklets, magazine articles and other communications within the established framework of the main United Church of God website.
- Engaging and interacting with readers and viewers through social media and via email.
- Maintains regular communication with the Manager of the EDU French office in the Bordeaux region to ensure optimal coordination on prospective member visits and member support.
- Development and maintenance of key website and social media metrics to provide for continuous improvement to communication strategies.
- Support the regular development of video, graphic and other content for posting on social media sites.
- Support for the translation of *Beyond Today* television scripts for the creation of French subtitles, with the end goal of having *Beyond Today* with French subtitles posted on the French website.

- Regular video editing (intros and outros) of French-language sermons.
- Receiving, translating (or arranging for translation) and processing all French ucg.org personal correspondence, booklet requests and first contact requests.
- As needed, organize United Youth Camp programs in French speaking areas under direction of senior pastor.
- As needed, support and provide translation for ministerial and leadership training programs in the French speaking areas.
- INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL: The successful candidate will be expected to travel on a regular basis to the EDU Office in the Bordeaux region of France and to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in France every other year so as to improve coordination of duties with the Bordeaux office manager and meet Church members and prospective members.

A bachelor's degree in communications or a related field is required. Spoken and written French language competency is required. Previous experience in a communications capacity is helpful and leadership certifications are a plus. Strong language, math, logic, reasoning and communication skills are required. Vision abilities required by this job include close vision and the ability to adjust focus.

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. This position requires the candidate to work at the Church's Cincinnati office.

To apply or for more information about the position, please contact human_resources@ucg.org.

Job Opportunities

The United Church of God is continuing to accept job applications for a French Communications Analyst, a Systems Administrator/Programmer and a Web Developer. Details about all of the current job postings for the Church may be reviewed at ucg.org/members/news/current-job-openings.

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