



United Church of God an International Association

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 543

December 15, 2022

From the Home Office...

Good afternoon,

Last week the Council of Elders met, and by now most of you have had the opportunity to read the Council reports and peruse the discussions.

Among the several significant agenda items was a presentation of the proposed operational initiatives of the Church for the upcoming fiscal year. As we assess the state of the world we live in, and the direction in which it appears to be headed, there is much “on the Church’s plate” to ensure that we are fulfilling the commission that Jesus Christ gave to us.

Christ clearly stated part of that commission in Matthew 28:19-20, when He said, “make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

In a poignant interaction between the apostle Peter and Jesus Christ, recorded for us in John 21:15-17, Christ instructs Peter to “feed My *lambs*,” “tend My *sheep*” and “feed My sheep.” There is much we can glean from this instruction as we look closely at the words Christ uses. He instructs that the “lambs” and the “sheep” are in one flock and they are both to be “fed.” The Greek word, used twice in those scriptures, indicates a “pasturing or grazing.” Further explaining, *Strong’s* says this word “portrays the duty of a Christian teacher to *promote in every way* the spiritual welfare of the members of the church.”

In Jeremiah 23:4, God defines His expectations of those who pastor His flocks: “‘I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,’ says the LORD.”

As you have likely heard me say several times, we live in a far different world today than we did three years ago. Everything changed with the sudden onslaught of COVID-19 and the various methods that were used to respond to that unexpected plague.

With the advent of “woke” culture, the sharp and sudden decline in the morality of the nation, and an escalating departure from societal norms, we recognize our responsibility to teach biblical truth and to provide guidance and direction, based on the Word of God, through these increasingly difficult times. Those have been addressed in the proposed initiatives for the Congregational Care area.

Taking care of God’s people is vitally important to us, but there is another part of the commission that Christ gave us, as well. Quoting from Mark 1:14-15, Mark 16:15, Isaiah 58:1, and Ezekiel 33:1-8, the commission we have is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world, to tell the people their sins and to preach a gospel of repentance, that is, turning back to God. And we are to be a watchman, warning the world of what is to come.

If we fail in these areas, we fail Christ and fall short of what He expects from us.

This morning, I reviewed a Pew Research Study that was released about a week ago that dealt with Americans’ views of “the end times.” You can read the release here if you would like: [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times)

The four main points of the study showed the following:

- 39% of U.S. adults believe we are living in the end times.
- 55% of U.S. adults believe that Jesus Christ will return to the earth “someday.”
- 10% of U.S. adults believe Christ will definitely or probably return in their lifetimes.
- A third of Americans who believe Christ will return say “*it is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede His return.*”

Do you see the opportunities and the responsibility we have, as God’s Church, to preach the gospel, preach the truth, and to show that God has given the answers to the questions the world has?

In accordance with that commission, operational initiatives have been developed that will be implemented in the upcoming months to preach the gospel, sound a warning message and lead people to the truth, as God calls. Plans are to do this with new methods and different avenues, such as 30 or 60-second TV ads, Facebook ads, and other ways of reaching the world that were not available 25 years ago.

It is exciting to be part of God’s work. You are a part of God’s work. Together, let’s pray daily for God’s will to be done. Ask Jesus Christ to lead His Church and—for all of us—that we will be receptive to His leadership and will work in unity with Him and one another to accomplish His will.

We will keep you informed of the progress of His Church.

Take care, everyone. Have a wonderful day of preparation tomorrow, and an inspiring Sabbath.

In Christ's service,



Rick Shabi

Wamatochick Weekend—Feb. 17-20

Young adults are invited to join their brothers and sisters for the second annual Wamatochick Weekend, Feb. 17–20, 2023, for a winter weekend in the pines of northern Arizona at the same facility used for the Southwest teen camp. It will be an inspirational and educational opportunity. The Sabbath will include church services, and sessions in the afternoon on topics close to our hearts, all connecting back to this year's theme, "The Word of God Is Living and Powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). Sunday will feature additional sessions, as well as indoor and outdoor activities. Everyone is welcome to stay an additional night this year to extend the weekend into Monday to enjoy more fellowship and activity time.

Ages are 18–32, and married and single are welcome. Cost is \$150 per person, including sleeping arrangements and seven meals. Camp is outside of Prescott, Arizona, and the Phoenix Airport is a two-hour drive from camp. If you are interested in attending, please register at ucg.regfox.com/wamatochick-weekend-2023. We hope you see you there!

Young Adult Winter Retreat—Feb. 17-20

Young adults aged 18-29, single or married, are welcome for a weekend of socializing and spiritual growth from Feb. 17–20, 2023, at Pipestem State Park in Pipestem, West Virginia. Activities will include an interactive Bible study, sledding, group bonfire, sports, swimming, and a whole day of skiing/snowboarding. Bible studies will focus on: "How can young adults contribute to the future of the United Church of God?" You can begin registration at ucgyawinterretreat.org. Get more information on the website or feel free to contact Sabrina Massie at (919) 943-9966 or sabrinamassie13@gmail.com.

Pray for the Gospel to Have Free Course

(2 Thes. 3:1 KJV)

U.S. Print Advertising—January and February 2023

Thank you for your prayers for the success of our 2022-2023 print advertising campaign in Sunday newspaper coupon inserts. So far, the United Church of God has reached over 100 million households with a variety of study aids (booklets) and a subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine. Response by mail, phone and our website has been very good, and more requests are arriving at the home office daily.

In January 2023, the campaign continues with 35 million ads offering our study aid “The Book of Revelation Unveiled” and in February 2023 with 35 million additional ads for the study aid “How to Understand the Bible.”



Furthermore, two new ads will be tested that offer a subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine. In January, five million households will receive an ad titled “What’s Next?” and in February an ad titled “Why?” will reach five million more families (see the ads above). Both advertisements target contemporary concerns (such as inflation) while explaining that the Bible offers genuine help, hope and certainty in the midst of constant change and escalating troubles.

Your ongoing prayers for God’s blessings on the remainder of our print ad campaign will be most appreciated.

—Peter Eddington, Operation Manager, Media and Communications Services

***Home Office Weekly Update* Launching Jan. 5, 2023**

After 12 years of weekly publication, we are revamping the *eNews from Ministerial and Member Services* and have renamed it the *Home Office Weekly Update*. This new name better reflects the scope of the newsletter, as it encompasses news and updates for all operations of the United Church of God.



The new publication will be launched on Jan. 5, 2023, and will continue to be published on Thursdays.

Because newsletters of this type are often caught by junk and spam email filters, it may be helpful to configure your email client to expect our *Weekly Update*. You should add both weekly_update@ucg.org and enews@ucg.ccsend.com as trusted senders that should not be blocked or considered “junk.” Also, so that you know what to look for in your inbox, the sender’s display name will show up as “Home Office Weekly Update” and the subject line of each newsletter will begin with “UCG Home Office Weekly Update:” followed by a date.

We hope that you will find the *Weekly Update* informative about events and news in the United Church of God. Be sure to look for the new, refreshed newsletter beginning in January.