



Serving at Camp as a Parent

by Jacob Sutherland

At Camp Cotubic, in the middle of the grounds, in an open field stands a grandly sized juniper tree. It emanates a smell similar to frankincense; more importantly, it has a unique and captivating feature, one you won't see until you stand close. Grafted onto this fragrant tree winds a grapevine whose leaves meander in and out of the fleshy, feathery needles. At the time, it was early summer so its grape clusters resembled little fronds. As I considered the delicate balance of tree and vine, it compelled me to visit many times walking to and from my lodge. It stirs my heart to reminisce about it now.

Up until my Camp Cotubic experience, one could have called me an outsider parent. Even so, one would think that

a man like me in his 50s having grown up in the Church would have reasonably accurate expectations of everything at a UYC camp, but that would be a mistaken assumption.

As we pulled up in our ridiculously cliché minivan I knew immediately whatever expectations I held came from years of UYC promotional videos. Save for "The Blob," I recognized absolutely nothing. None of it at all compared to the construct my mind created based on the videos, which are well-done productions of course, but one cannot fully understand a place unless one travels to that place. The same goes for the camp's modus operandi. Staff orientation focused much on The Zone, a compilation of Bible-based principles to abide by and impart to our campers.

As the day progressed, It occurred to me that I spent many years content with a mistaken

notion of what UYC camps were all about. It was always nice to see my kids happy and reinvigorated, but still I based my assumptions much on an era in which my generation as teens was spoiled on massive congregations and a bottomless well of amenities; some being our own camp facilities that we assumed we would always possess. The Feast of Tabernacles often filled halls with 15,000 people or more. At those Feasts we boasted on being a peculiar people, but I don't know if we truly understood what it meant. It was a time that we felt invincible and took many things for granted.

We are still a peculiar people, but now we must navigate this world with even fewer numbers. We cannot afford to take what we have for granted. That I believe is one of the most important factors contributing to the attitude of this time opposite of the attitude of my time. The



Amazing Race staff at Camp Cotubic 2023

attitude of humility and thankfulness I observed at camp prevailed over any attitude borne of opulence. I now see its effects after camp more than I saw it before in local congregations. Thankfulness prevails.

Sure, like any camp, we offered games and fun activities, but make no mistake, our kids

know how different we are, and therefore know the value of each other's fellowship, a fellowship of peculiar people. I saw evidence that many of our kids understand it better than my generation ever did. Is

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British Isles Ministerial Conference

by Rick Shabi

More than 60 elders and leaders from the Church in the British Isles (and their wives) gathered together in the beautiful little village of Altrincham, England, just outside of Manchester, for four days of training and a lot of discussion about the work of the Church in the British Isles.

It was a wonderful, productive conference that included an inspiring Sabbath day and plenty of time to discuss, plan and share ideas in an open atmosphere where everyone was committed to the Church and "advancing the mission" God has given us.

United Church of God British Isles CEO David Fenney, and his wife, Barbara, along with National Council chairman Jason Godfrey and others did a marvelous job in planning and making sure everything ran just right. Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and I, along with our wives, had the privilege of being there and conducting various presentations and facilitating discussions.

As the sessions ended on Monday evening, there was a great deal of excitement and energy in the room. Ideas and plans were shared concerning education, fostering congregational togetherness, focusing



on living by every word of God, preaching the gospel and a warning message in "Ephraim"

in new ways, and building on the initiatives and use of social media that have been recently

introduced in America—all as Jesus Christ guides and directs. **UN**

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2 Watch Biblical Worldview Videos

A new video series titled “A Biblical Worldview” is being presented by Rick Shabi each week. These 10- to 15-minute videos are intended to be the Church’s response to what is going on in the world. They are directed more towards the audience of the world—as opposed to our membership—and preach a warning message, a message of repentance and a message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the nations.

The chart shows YouTube analytics from the first 10 episodes. Also included are analytics from the last 10 *Beyond Today* television programs.

You can watch these videos at ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-daily and from our YouTube channel at youtube.com/user/BeyondTodayTV. You can also view these videos on the *Beyond Today* app on Google Play for Android devices, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung smart TVs, LG smart TVs, and Apple iOS devices.

*Peter Eddington—
Operation Manager, Media
and Communications Services*

Biblical Worldview Title	Date Posted	Views	Likes	Subs Added	Length	Average View Time	Average Percent Viewed
What Vivek Said Was Right	02/02/2024	71,278	1,774	393	11:12	3:05	27.7%
Tucker Said He Didn’t Know Why—The Decline of English-Speaking Nations	02/09/2024	11,574	408	44	12:27	6:04	48.8%
Where Is the West and the United States in the Coming New World Order?	02/16/2024	28,681	460	131	11:55	4:31	38.0%
“He Gets Us”—Do You Get Him?	02/23/2024	6,874	272	21	12:53	6:37	51.4%
Netanyahu’s Stand Against Hamas: Can There Be a Gaza Ceasefire?	03/08/2024	8,383	303	39	9:29	5:32	58.4%
Why Hamas Attacked Israel	03/15/2024	22,277	566	239	11:38	4:44	40.7%
Christ Gave Only One Sign That He Is the Messiah	03/22/2024	10,232	380	36	12:45	5:25	42.5%
The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday	03/27/2024	75,748	1,505	614	10:47	3:58	36.9%
The Solar Eclipse: A Warning Message from God of Impending Doom?	04/05/2024	35,923	679	153	11:49	4:06	34.8%
Is It Too Late For America?	04/12/2024	8,111	293	13	11:21	4:59	44.0%
<i>Beyond Today</i> TV Title	Date Posted	Views	Likes	Subs Added	Length	Average View Time	Average Percent Viewed
When Will Peace Come to the Middle East (BT TV Ad)	11/09/2023	394,373	306	42	0:54	0:47	87.8%
Hell Unleashed: The Spirit Behind the Hamas Attacks	12/13/2023	6,446	175	18	28:30	14:34	51.4%
Do You Have an Immortal Soul? (BT TV Ad)	01/11/2024	60,124	101	4	0:49	0:44	90.2%
5 Steps to Real Change, Part 3—Repentance and Baptism	01/22/2024	2,279	96	-	28:30	13:58	49.3%
The Way, Part 4—The Life-Changing Promise of the Father	01/24/2024	3,903	126	11	28:30	14:20	50.6%
5 Steps to Real Change, Part 4—The Gift of the Holy Spirit	02/14/2024	3,001	107	7	28:30	13:44	48.5%
The Way, Part 5—When a Church Dies	02/21/2024	4,803	150	7	28:30	12:53	45.5%
Should I Celebrate Easter?	03/26/2024	5,100	216	26	28:30	10:59	38.8%
Is Anger Destroying Your Life?	03/27/2024	114	2	-	28:30	18:28	65.2%
5 Steps to Real Change, Part 5—Two Questions Waiting for an Answer?	04/09/2024	1,915	80	-1	28:30	13:08	46.3%

Serving at Camp as a Parent

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The Amazing Race activity combines running with problem solving.

camp a perfect place? No! Will we see mistakes made by staff and campers? Yes! Only Christ hit the bullseye every time, but in the UYC environment, we try hard and we work so our kids may know that we love them. We love them enough to prepare them for success beyond that of worldly society. This peculiar people holds to a different definition of success. We love them enough to teach them of the Kingdom, the great finish line we race toward. We want to provide them an oasis

of sanity amidst an increasingly insane world.

God has blessed me and my wife with a son, a daughter and another son in that order. All three of them have never missed a year of UYC camp since the time each was eligible to go. Our youngest last year had the choice of serving on Camp Cotubic staff or going one last round as a camper. His heart has always careened toward sentiment, so he of course chose camper. Our daughter donned her cool sun-

glasses, a silver whistle and a red suit to serve as a lifeguard at the waterfront. Our eldest child served on The Amazing Race crew, an activity that combines running with problem solving. Dr. Dunkle modeled the Amazing Race after the popular television series bearing the same name.

The difference this year for my children is that I tagged along. A dear friend of the family made me promise to apply. I never in a million years thought they would have me, but they did. For many reasons, I am thankful. Among those reasons—I got to serve on The Amazing Race crew side by side with my son. In this activity I enjoyed a unique vantage point in which I could play the part of teacher. This included helping kids arrange Bible events in chronological order and helping them see a life lesson emerge from working together to save a golf ball from falling to the ground. I even had the opportunity to lead a Christian living class. How exhilarating it was to see such broad participation, enthusiasm, insight and under-

standing. Many in the world would dismiss The Zone as foolishness, as Pollyanna corniness, but not our kids.

As a former outsider, I encourage readers, especially those with teens, to apply to your nearest UYC camp. Don’t wait like I did. Anyone who has served will tell you it is not easy to pause their lives for better than a week especially considering they must soon do it all over again for the Feast of Tabernacles, but they will also tell you it is worth it many times over. If our daily surroundings and recent events worry you, go to camp. There you will see many of our young campers and young staff members demonstrate surprising faith. Like me, a former outsider parent, it will give you hope to know God has His hand on them.

I think often about the juniper tree supporting the grape vine. It makes me reflect on how we rely on Jesus Christ as our tree of life. If we are to emulate Him, we too should support our kids, like the juniper tree with our little vines hidden in plain sight, waiting for tender fronds

to grow into clusters of grapes capable of feeding whoever may walk by.

If you turn on the news or open your social media, you can’t miss how mad the world has become as if someone has violently ripped off the hems of polite society. Peace has been removed from every corner of every space save our houses. The adversary is hard afoot. At what point does our time come, when God calls us to duty? I can’t help but think of Joel 2:28, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”

Whether it comes soon, or whether history must play out more, we engage in a generational effort. The world will take notice of our peculiarity with more intensity. When does God call us to duty? The answer is now. Now more than ever, with the help of God’s Spirit, we are called upon to work hard to support our kids, our young men and women, our juniper in the field. **UN**

Operation Manager's Update

Ministerial and Member Services



Leighton and Nordia Forsythe



Mike and Karrie Helwig



Ron and Rose Bell



Joe (and Brenda) Greene

We're happy to announce that on Feb. 17, 2024, Leighton Forsythe was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife Nordia, serve the congregations of Gladstone, Rockhampton and Bundaberg, Australia.

On March 16, 2024, Mike Helwig was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife Karrie, serve the congregation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Ron Bell, an elder from the Buffalo, New York congrega-

tion, was hired in March. He now serves as an assistant pastor alongside pastor Johnnie Lambert for the congregations in Buffalo and Elmira, New York.

At the beginning of April, Joe Greene was transferred from Wisconsin to pastor the congregations in Roanoke and Richmond, Virginia, in addition to his role as Human Resources Manager. This will ease the pastoral workload for Jay Ledbetter, who had been pastor for Roa-

noke, and for Craig Scott, who had been pastor for Richmond. Mr. Ledbetter and Mr. Scott will continue to pastor their remaining congregations.

God's Spirit and wisdom is certainly necessary in guiding these ministers in their new roles. Thank you for your con-

tinued prayers that they may admonish and teach everyone with wisdom as they serve (Colossians 1:28). Your payers for them, their families and the congregations where they serve are greatly appreciated. **UN**

Steve Myers is the Ministerial and Member Services manager for UCG and an elder who serves in the Cincinnati, Ohio area. He can be reached at steve_myers@ucg.org



Honoring the Halls and the Retirement of Larry Darden



On the Sabbath of March 30, 2024, the Los Angeles congregation honored Stephen and Donna Hall, long-time deacon and deaconess. After a lifetime of service in the Pasadena area, the Halls are retiring and moving to Northern California.

The Los Angeles congregation also honored Larry Darden, General Counsel for United Church of God, an International Association since 1995, who retired effective March 31, 2024. His wife Patti and his son Scott joined the congregation as Larry received a special card of acknowledgement from Rick Shabi. Larry Darden, in remarks, acknowledged mentor Ralph

Helge who originally hired him as a paralegal in 1974. Ralph and wife, Ingrid Helge, are also members of the Los Angeles congregation.

Special cakes during refreshment afterwards added to the festive day.

Frank Fish

Larry mentored in the practice of law under the tutelage of Ralph K. Helge (now retired) in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) Legal Office until 1995, after which he became a member of the United Church of God (UCG) and was later appointed as General Counsel for UCG and Legal Counsel to the Council of Elders.



Reflecting back on his 50 years, Larry Darden's most memorable job experiences include: living through the California Attorney General's illegal takeover of WCG in early 1979 and the two-year legal fight against that state-sponsored oppression; supporting UCG's new type of representative governance and the setting up of policies and practices needed for a newly established organization; offering aid to brethren with issues related to their faith, such as obtaining allowances to keep the Sabbath or Holy Day, issues of conscience such as religious accommodation for students and

employees, selective service registration, jury duty and testimony, immigration and visas.

Larry says, "My hope is that the organized trove of legal forms, precedents in various cases and other materials I have developed over the years will be of help to my successor in serving the legal needs of UCG."

On a personal level, Larry was married to Carolan Meade for 37 years, until her death in 2010. Together they had two sons Ted and Scott, and he has two grandsons. In 2015 he married Patricia Bergstrom, adding stepdaughters Rebecca (and her family) and Tammy Bergstrom. **UN**

**Sylas James Wesley Call**

Feb. 29, 2024

Births

Sylas James Wesley Call

Wesley and Shyanne Call of the West Portsmouth, Ohio congregation are happy to announce the birth of their son Sylas James Wesley Call. Sylas was born on “leap day,” Feb. 29, 2024 at 8:59 a.m., weighing 8 lbs 12 oz and was 20 ¾ inches long. Sylas is loving all the attention from his big sister Willow, his great-grandparents Jim and Darlene Call of McDermott, Ohio, great grandpa Bill Ramey and grandparents Jim and Laura Call, and Kandy Groves of Portsmouth, Ohio.

Weddings

Kyle Bacher and Joy Pinchback

Scott and Melody Bacher of Grand Junction, Colorado and Johnny and Lolita Pinchback of Midland, Texas are pleased to announce the marriage of their children, Kyle Bacher and Joy Pinchback. The happy couple were united in marriage on Nov. 20, 2023. The Scottish-themed ceremony took place at the Mesa County Fairgrounds. The couple resides in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Boone Savoca and Sarah Bacher

Dan and Lyda Savoca of Debeque, Colorado and Scott and Melody Bacher of Grand Junction, Colorado are pleased to announce the marriage of their children, Boone Savoca and Sarah Bacher, on Aug. 20, 2023. The wedding followed a whirlwind romance of five months. The ceremony was performed in a picturesque mountain setting on the Grand Mesa. The happy

**Kyle Bacher and Joy Pinchback**

Nov. 20, 2023

couple now reside in Debeque, Colorado.

Anniversaries

Floyd and Doris Phelps

In February, the Cincinnati East congregation joyfully honored and celebrated Floyd and Doris Phelps’ milestone 60th wedding anniversary. Upon reflection of their many years together, they shared, “It is important to express your love and admiration to and for each other often, even daily. Don't ever take for granted each other's love and feelings. Although work and a career is important, it should never take over your life and marriage. Your children are the result of your love for your mate and should remain a high priority. It is a joint responsibility to love, cherish and teach them to love God and to always be an example of God's love.” Congratulations Floyd and Doris!

Jim and Susie Sullivan

Jim and Susie Sullivan celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Oct. 6, 2023 during the Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City, Florida. Friends and family also had a cookout in their honor when they returned home.

Jim was born in the small town of Townsend, Tennessee in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains. He began attending the Worldwide Church of God in Asheville, North Carolina in January 1965, driving over two hours one way to reach Sabbath services for several months. He was baptized in the spring of 1965 and was a founding member of the Worldwide congregation in Knoxville, Tennessee when services began there on July 17, 1965.

**Boone Savoca and Sarah Bacher**

Aug. 20, 2023

Susie and her family started attending in Knoxville in early 1968. She did not know who Jim was until she became a teenager. Their first date was in November 1972 when they went with a group of young adults on an 11-mile bicycle trip around the Cades Cove Loop in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They were a couple from that point forward and were married a year later by Harold Lester, pastor of the Knoxville congregation at that time.

Susie was baptized in July of 1972, and she and Jim served the Church in multiple capacities over the years, oftentimes entertaining groups of young adults in their home. They were heavily involved with the Y.O.U. program, coaching teams and providing room and board for weekend activities. The time they spent with the young people in God's Church are some of the best memories for Jim and Susie.

After high school, Jim began his work career as a draftsman with an engineering company. He later became a Registered Land Surveyor and is still active to some degree in that field. He especially enjoys subdivision layout. Susie enjoyed many years as a proficient and successful claims processor with insurance companies in the healthcare field.

Jim and Susie now live in Maryville, Tennessee and attend the United Church of God congregation in Knoxville.

Obituaries

Donna M. Black

Donna M. Black of the Beloit, Wisconsin congregation, aged 84, died peacefully on the morning of March 4, 2024. Donna and her husband Dale became mem-

**Floyd and Doris Phelps**60th anniversary

bers of the Worldwide Church of God in 1967. In 1995, that membership was transitioned into the United Church of God. Donna spent her whole adult life pursuing a relationship with God, her Heavenly Father. Throughout her years in the United Church of God, she became instrumental in many church activities, including serving as the editor of The Beloit News, which later became Building Bridges, designed to keep the local and regional church family informed. Dale and Donna were well-known for their 14 years of service at the information desk at the Wisconsin Feast sites from 2004 to 2018.

Donna went to college at age 45 and earned two two-year degrees in secretary and record keeping. Donna's life has been filled with much activity throughout the years. She enjoyed free-hand art and painted many pieces throughout her life.

Goldia Marie Brackett

Goldia Marie “Jo” Brackett, age 97 of Maryville, Tennessee passed away Friday, Aug. 18, 2023 at home. She was born in Alcoa, Tennessee, a life-long resident of Blount County, and a long-time member of The United Church of God. She had been married 42 years when her husband died in 1984. She had seven children; 14 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; and many others who also claimed her as “Granny.” Goldia is preceded in death by her husband, Carr Brackett, and son, Ronald Brackett. She is survived by her sons, Carson Brackett, Pat Brackett (Andrea) and Mike Brackett (Ann), and daughters, Sandy McCollum (Eddie), Debbie Keeble (David) and Susie Sullivan (Jim).

Jo Brackett was born Aug. 21, 1925 in Maryville. She enjoyed sports as a young girl, even though that was not considered

**Jim and Susie Sullivan**50th anniversary

“ladylike” in those days. She was a bright young woman and often talked about her teachers complimenting her on her penmanship and mastery of math. However, a young man captured her attention when she was 16, and they eloped to Georgia to get married. When the clerk asked her how old she was, she said 17, the legal age for marriage, and he replied, “Of course, you are all 17 when you come here.” She lived out her love of sports through her husband, who played baseball on a semi-professional team and through her children, several of whom were accomplished athletes.

Jo was a determined woman—so determined that she thought she could prove her husband wrong when he was called to understand God's truth. However, this was one of the few tests she failed; she had to admit he was right, and she and her husband began attending the Worldwide Church of God and were baptized in 1968. Even after her husband's death, she actively served in her local Knoxville, Tennessee congregation as the church librarian. She was much loved by all the members and was always ready to listen to anyone who had a story to tell. She enjoyed hosting many young adult activities at her home. After her children were married and had families of their own, she held large cookouts and Thanksgiving celebrations for all to enjoy.

Samara Helena Rae Brock

It has been said that a person is the sum total of their life's experience. We know that a person's life is much more than that. It's the sum total of how they respond to their life's experiences. Good responses, by godly standards, develop good character. Samara was on track for having good character.



Donna M. Black

May 16, 1939-March 4, 2024

In 2009, Samara Brock received the Bolingbrook-Romeoville, Illinois Character Counts Award. The Mayor of Romeoville noted as he presented to her this nationally recognized award that Samara was the youngest recipient to ever receive this award at the age of four.

Samara, as a baby, learned to say “please” and “thank you.” She loved to smile at people to make them happy. At the age of 3, she told her mother that she wanted to cut off her hair to give it to a girl who did not have any. That was her wish and so it happened. She repeated this act of generosity a few years later as soon as her hair grew out enough to do it again. She was always sensitive to the needs of others, thoughtful and concerned for others, especially other children. Samara had no trouble relating to adults either. She was aware of a person in distress and offered hugs. She dearly loved her sisters, Viviana and Brielle; and brother Logan was her best friend who dedicated much of his youth to her well-being and stayed close to her at home and school.

Samara mused over the irony that while she was not able to eat without pain due to a paralyzed stomach, she loved to cook, especially desserts. She would masterfully create a variety of delectable treats all for the purpose of gifting them to family, friends and teachers. During her years of being bed-ridden, her favorite thing to watch on TV was the Cooking Channel. She’d picture herself preparing food to please others. She had a heart for people.

Samara loved music! She was studious as her grandfather would teach her to read music and play piano. She and Logan learned together and did their first recital as a duet. She had a beautiful voice and wanted



Goldia Marie Brackett

Aug. 21, 1925-Aug. 18, 2023

to sing in the Church choir to praise God with music, so she joined choir with her mother for six weeks before she became too ill and was hospitalized. Music was especially important to her. She recognized it as a language of expression, and she had much to express.

Prior to illness, her playground was the great outdoors. She was very athletic. She loved animals and had no fear of them. God was generous with her. Samara truly lived.

When she’d be inspired by others, it tended to be by people who were giving of themselves to benefit others. Samara enjoyed one-on-one time with her Dad while fishing. Mom strongly encouraged it, as it made for life-long memories. Family members cultivated Samara’s love of learning. She was talented with many gifts.

There is a Jewish tradition which says a person’s first gift is their name. Samara’s Hebrew name means “protected by God.” Indeed, she was protected by God continuously through her 10-year health battle.

Samara was grateful to God for the never-ending prayers of her Church family from around the world. She recognized God provides His family with His love for us to share, pray and suffer along with each other. She understood the power of prayer through family unity.

Samara had a voracious appetite for learning and had an excellent memory. Her retention and recall were strong. She’d always express appreciation for those who taught her, especially her mother who homeschooled her and her grandmother (aka Mimi) for giving her guidance. Bible study was an awesome discovery process for her. She’d express her appreciation to Papa for the Bible lessons and to her dad for teach-



Samara Helena Rae Brock

March 4, 2005-Feb. 1, 2024

ing her, Logan, Vivi and Brielle about the biblical patriarchs, especially Noah. Her mother reinforced every good thing Samara learned. Whatever her mother would endorse or instruct, Samara was keenly sensitive to it and learned to love truth because of it.

Having been homeschooled, Samara took full advantage of her opportunity to attend public high school. She was active as much as her health allowed. Her wheelchair didn’t hinder her involvement. She was on the year-book staff. Her brother Logan helped her with involvement in many activities. Other students were inspired by her open-throated active participation.

In the early years of her illness, her grandfather would give her music therapy by singing to her. It was a good distraction from the pain she suffered, and the songs brought a smile to her face. Her mother would play the music in the Church hymnal constantly in the background for a calming effect.

Samara’s years in various hospitals challenged her. Grandmother Mimi would encourage Samara to not quit and called her “my Warrior Princess” because she always fought pain and resisted death. When many professionals said she would not last through the night she’d surprise them yet again and again. Samara really wanted to live. God gave her that strength of will and desire for life. Samara’s tenacity and strong will towards life were reflected in her favorite hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

Most of all, Samara looked towards the Kingdom of God. She understood about the family of God. Even while in Hospice Care for a year (via her mother’s precious care 24/7) at home, Samara was thrilled at the prospect of God’s promise



Donald Lee Fenner

Sept. 20, 1930-April 10, 2024

of being resurrected to be whole and without pain. She told her mother she liked the book of Job “because Job really resonates with me.” The void in our hearts shall be forever filled with the memories of our Samara and the unifying love of the brethren, for which we are eternally grateful. To the Kingdom!

Donald Lee Fenner

Donald Lee Fenner, 93, died peacefully at his home on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:05 p.m. in East Danville, Ohio. He was born on Sept. 20, 1930 to Lewis Cleo and Minnie Ann (Meyers) Fenner of Hillsboro, Ohio. His siblings included Ruth Ann, Lloyd Allen, Dorsey Lee, Dorey L. and Mamie Ellen, also deceased.

Donny was baptized into the Body of Jesus Christ on July 4, 1963 by Frank McCrady, Sr., a minister in the Worldwide Church of God, and has faithfully attended United Church of God in Milford, Ohio since May of 1995. Don enjoyed getting together with his church brethren, especially when food was involved.

Don attended school in Owensville and Danville, Ohio. He chose to become a carpenter and worked in Columbus, Ohio and in Miami, Florida for many years until his retirement. His hobbies included riding a Harley, fishing, listening to sermons, gardening and cutting wood to heat his home. Don was a self-sufficient man, not requiring help from anyone.

Don loved to talk about the Bible and wondered what he would be doing in the Kingdom of God. On one of the last visits, Don quoted the following scripture in Romans 8:18, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (King James Version).



Milton Nathaniel Lindsay

Aug. 21, 1957-March 24, 2024

Graveside services, officiated by his minister, Mark Welch, were held on Tuesday, April 16, 1:00 p.m. at the Hamer Township Cemetery, East Danville and Caleb Hill Roads, Danville, Ohio. Memorial Contributions may be made to the United Church of God at 555 Techne Center Drive, Milford, OH 45150. Arrangements were made by Edgington Funeral Home. Friends and family will miss Donny and look forward to seeing him at Christ’s return.

Milton Nathaniel Lindsay

Milton Nathaniel Lindsay Jr., 66, a member of the Freeport, Bahamas congregation, died on March 24. His death came just eighteen days after that of his oldest sister, Cynthia Williams, who was also a member of the Freeport congregation. Milton was born Aug. 21, 1957 in Nassau, Bahamas. After completing high school, he moved to Freeport, Bahamas where he made his home.

Milton was a gentle, quiet man of few words. He was very reliable and always available to his family. He was known for always being on time. Milton was a dedicated worker, punctual in attendance, and was never late paying his bills. Remarkably, he worked for 45 years at the same company before his retirement in 2022. He married and had a son whom he named Mark, who died at 10 years old.

His upbringing in a Christian household laid a foundation that helped him to find God’s true Church. He was baptized and attended the United Church of God until his death.

Although Milton was physically a strong man, he suffered from undiagnosed pain for much of his adult life. In his final

**Judith Amos Sumner**

May 4, 1952-Feb. 2, 2024

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months, he was in and out of the hospital. His health continued to deteriorate until he succumbed to his illness. Milton is survived by six of his 10 siblings and many nieces and nephews. His siblings paid him this final tribute: "Milton, you touched each of our lives in a special way. You captured our hearts and blessed us with your unique personality. Your walk, smile, mischievous laughter, the disjointed finger you loved pointing to us, and your disciplined life will always be remembered. We mourn for you, and no doubt will always feel your loss. But little brother, you take your peaceful rest, and we look forward to the time we get to see each other again."

Judith Sumner

Judith Amos Sumner (71) of Grayling, Michigan died very suddenly and unexpectedly on Friday, Feb. 2, 2024 in Traverse City, Michigan. She was born on May 4, 1952 in Wheeling, West Virginia to Charles Junior Amos and Mary Susana Peori Amos. Judy was the second of five children raised on a farm at the top of a hill in Fulton. Often, she would take her daughters up to visit the old farm and give them a taste of the back roads of West Virginia. Her mother, Mary, found Herbert Armstrong and the Radio Church of God in the early 1960s and began attending Sabbath services with the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) shortly afterward.

Judith graduated from Triadelphia High School, then attended Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas. Excelling in basketball and track, she enjoyed being active and always shared fond memories of being a counselor for the Boundary

**Cynthia Norma Williams**

March 30, 1938-March 6, 2024

Waters Canoe Trip in Orr, Minnesota. After graduating with a degree in home economics and physical education, she moved to Pasadena, California and lived and worked near the WCG Headquarters. While there, she met and later married Michal Howard Sumner and the couple moved to his hometown of Alpena, Michigan.

Judy and Michal had two daughters, Mika and Alexis. The family later moved to Grayling where Judy lived until her death. Judy went back to school and attended Kirtland Community College, majoring in medical terminology and medical transcription. After graduation she worked for Mercy Hospital of Grayling. Judy worked as a medical transcriptionist at the hospital for almost 30 years.

Judy was a long-time member of the United Church of God, attending the Gaylord, Michigan congregation. She loved to be able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles sites around the world and loved the time spent with brethren. She always had a fondness for the children in the congregation and made sure to bring them special Sabbath gifts or make time to share a story or laugh with them. Some of her favorite Feast memories were teaching all the kids Uno during the 2018 Suriname Feast, visiting with the Italian nonne (grandmothers) in the evenings and the beachside braai (BBQ) in South Africa. Judy loved an adventure and got a good laugh while her daughter Alexis figured out how to drive on the opposite side of the road.

She started volunteering with the local Meals on Wheels program and liked to keep herself busy. Judy loved reading and especially learning about history. She is preceded in death by her parents, Charles

and Mary. Judy is survived by her daughters Mika and Alexis (Christopher); siblings Alexa (Larry) Parker, Charles (Sandi) Amos, and Louis Amos; cousin Patty Smith and many nieces, a nephew and extended family.

Memorial services in Northern Michigan and Wheeling, West Virginia will be planned at a later date.

Memories and condolences can be shared online on the Keeper website at <https://www.mykeeper.com/profile/Judith-Sumner/>. In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to Crawford County Commission on Aging <https://www.crawfordcoa.org/make-a-donation> or the UCG Camp Program <https://donate.ucg.org>.

Cynthia Norma Williams

Cynthia Norma Williams, 85, the deaconess of our Freeport, Bahamas congregation, died on the evening of March 6, a few weeks before her 86th birthday. Cynthia was a resident of Freeport, and she attended her last Sabbath service just days before she died. She was a pillar in the Bahamas congregation and beloved by many in the Church and her large and extended family.

Cynthia was born March 30, 1938 in Eleuthera, Bahamas, an island of the Bahamas archipelago, as the oldest of 11 siblings. At three years old, she moved with her mother to Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, where she attended various schools. After

high school, Cynthia married her first husband, Richard Hall, with whom she had six children. In 1976, she met her second husband, Henry Brice Williams. Both of their first spouses had died, and they married in 1982. After Henry died in 2014, Cynthia fondly remembered their many years together.

Cynthia learned secretarial skills and worked in the banking and tourism industries. Her work in the Ministry of Tourism in Freeport was instrumental in her ability to help plan the Feast of Tabernacles in the Bahamas for many years. She retired from paid employment in her late 60s. Then, she did much volunteer work, especially at the Evangeline Jervis Community Service Center. She gave her time and resources to those less fortunate than her. She cared for her family, nursed the sick, baked and sewed for others and gave of herself in whatever way she could.

Cynthia began attending the Worldwide Church of God in 1972 and was baptized in 1973. She was ordained a deaconess in 1995 and hosted Sabbath services in her home for a while. Cynthia loved to study the Bible, her favorite book, and she applied the Word of God to every part of her life. She continually praised and thanked God for His goodness. Even immediately after Hurricane Dorian devastated Freeport in September 2019, she wrote to her pastor, "By God's grace, we made

it through. Lots of damage inside, but things can be replaced. Thanks so very much for all the prayers. Our God is an awesome God, and to Him be all the glory." As her daughter, Hazel, wrote of Cynthia, "Her mouth continually praised God for His goodness, during good and hard times, no matter how she felt. We will truly miss her, but she would want us not to mourn but continue the legacy she started by walking in the footsteps of Jesus, as she strived to do daily."

Cynthia is preceded in death by her husband, Henry Brice Williams, sons Kelvin, Michael and Israel, and three stepsons, Allan, Carl and Roy. She is survived by her son Joseph, daughters Orchid and Hazel, stepdaughters Susan, Linda and Constance, and dozens of grandchildren, nieces, nephews and great-grandchildren. Since her death, Cynthia's family and Church brethren have paid tribute to her excellent example of living by her faith in God. **UN**

Announcements for *United News* can be sent by email (preferred) to un@ucg.org, or by mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Please include a color photo; if mailing in, please indicate if you would like the photo returned. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and may be lightly edited for length and/or clarity by *United News* staff.

Calling All Graduates!

We plan to feature the high school and university graduates of 2024 in the July-August issue of *United News*! Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below and send a photograph by June 5. Please keep it to 250 words maximum. Also, include your phone number or email address in case we need to confirm spellings, etc. (they will not be printed). Send with a recent, appropriate photo of the graduate by June 5. Digital photos should be at least 800 pixels in their smallest dimension to print sharply. Send by email to un@ucg.org, or send by mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 (postmarked by June 5). We may edit for clarity and/or length to meet the 250-word maximum length.

Here's what to include:

1. Graduate's name
2. Parents' names (if high school grad)
3. Congregation
4. School, work, internship, co-op or other accomplishments
5. Interests, interesting facts about yourself, Church activities you're involved in, hobbies, unusual skills, etc.
6. Plans after graduation

Congratulations!

“Fan the Flame”—Wamatochick Young Adult Weekend

We had a wonderful Young Adults’ Wamatochick Weekend from Feb. 23-26, with 44 of God’s people coming together to consider how we “Fan the Flame” to keep God’s Spirit active in our lives. The theme of the weekend was based on 2 Timothy 1:6, “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” This theme served as the basis for the messages and discussions, which were led by the young adult participants and the local ministry.

We started on Friday night with a discussion led by Kristina Fogelson on living by faith and looking to Christ’s example of endurance for motivation to finish our march to the Kingdom.

Sabbath services were a split sermon format in which Brent Fogelson presented on how to address feelings of anxiety.

Service was the subject of the second split sermon presented by Scott McKeon, the local pastor. We went through Christ’s teachings on the importance of

loving one another and looking after each other’s needs. This will be the way His disciples are identified when He returns as He indicates in Matthew 25.

Sessions in the afternoon included presentations by Bryce Fogelson, Kyle Bacher and Zoey Gabbard.

In Sunday’s session we discussed when and where we might study the Word, and Monday’s follow-up session involved what and how to study. If we are going to have a meaningful personal relationship with our Creator, it is critical that we have a pattern of turning to Him for direction, protection and correction.

Sunday was filled with activities such as horseback riding, mountain biking and a 4.5-mile hike where some snowballs may have been launched from the snow on the side of the trail.

It was a wonderful weekend filled with fun and fellowship, fabulous food prepared by the Woods of Albuquerque, outstanding cobbler by Barb Anderson and lots of fun games

and conversation. A fire outside in the crisp air surrounded by snow was a highlight of Sunday evening. We had a fire burning in the lodge during all the sessions, adding to the cozy atmosphere.

We look forward to next year already. Thank you all for your prayers and support as we focused on the next generation of the Body of Christ.

Please mark your calendars for the last weekend of February 2025!

Scott McKeon



“Dancing in the Rain”—Springfield Women’s Weekend



It was such a pleasure for the Springfield, Missouri congregation to host the Women’s Enrichment weekend again this year! The event was held the weekend of March 2 and 3. After missing the Covid years and then last year’s gathering only being one day, it was exciting to have the whole weekend to enjoy. The theme was “Dancing in the Rain” which was shared in every facet of the weekend.

As the weekend began the VFW hall in Ozark, Missouri filled quickly with the men and women who gathered to keep God’s Sabbath. Cheerful chatter filled the room as brethren greeted both old friends and

new arrivals. Many of them had arrived Friday night and stayed in local hotels.

For services, we had 76 brethren in attendance, and we had the honor of having two guest speakers. Tim Martens of northwest Arkansas spoke about the biblical power couple Priscilla and Aquila. Then Gary Smith of Houston, Texas talked about the challenges of Jesus’ mother Mary. After services all of us enjoyed a savory meal of tacos and taco salads with all the fixings, followed by a wide variety of desserts. Once lunch was completed the men in the group left to attend a gathering at the Ott’s farm to enjoy fellowship and chili. This has become a reg-

ular event looked forward to by many of the men.

The tables and room decorations, as well as the ladies’ speeches, were delightful! Raindrops, dancing, umbrellas, clouds, storms and birds were presented throughout the room and the stories told. There were 50 ladies in attendance. Jamie Bettes, our moderator, welcomed us all to the weekend and told a few cute jokes to keep the mood light. Then we were thoroughly entranced by the special music presented by Wanda Cook who played a beautiful piano piece called “Rain.”

After some time to get acquainted, Keri Myklebust start-

ed us off with a deeply emotional speech called “The Path of Finding My True Source of Self-Worth.” A memorable quote from that speech was, “If God believes in me, then I need to believe it too.” Christal Curtis then led a discussion group “Learning to Dance in the Rain”—the ladies shared personal stories about weathering storms, miracles, answered prayers, helping others, Bible study and remaining thankful. It was a very eye-opening session and helped us all feel a bit closer to one another.

Kathy Sanny then shared her very personal survival story called “Your Authentic Self.” This was followed by another group activity led by Deana Kemp called “Women in the Bible.” After sharing a lovely soup and sandwich dinner we heard from Rhonda Lopez in an endearing speech called “My Dance.” After hearing some music entitled “Blessings” by Laura Story, our silent auction began.

On Sunday, after a continental breakfast, we were treated to a saxophone solo by Jamie Bettes and heard from our keynote speaker Amber Duran. Amber could not attend in person but

we were able to hear her speech via the Teams application. Her inspirational speech “Rain or Shine, Our Spiritual Dance” was very impactful. We then heard from Laurie Cogle who spoke of the storms that come through life and how we must keep dancing right on through them. Mer-na Leisure Eppick included a video of the classic dance from the movie “Singing in the Rain” and performed a dance she learned. She spoke of how challenging the dance can really be, and how one word can help us to focus on our spiritual growth.

Jamie Bettes showed us all how to use the UCG website as a resource and what was available, and after another activity and closing remarks, we shared some leftovers and finished up the silent auction. The auction raised \$1,370 and an additional \$190 from a donation jar. The funds will be donated to LifeNets for the church building project in Zambia.

The ladies all left the weekend prepared to dance through the rainy days, watch the clouds for what may be coming and weather the storms that inevitably come into our lives.

Lorelei Nettles

“For Such a Time as This”—Puget Sound Women’s Weekend



About 60 ladies gathered for a themed women's weekend.

Nestled in the lovely town of La Conner at the La Conner Country Inn, approximately 60 ladies from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, California, Michigan and Canada, joined together for the March 1-3, 2024 Puget Sound Women’s Enrichment Weekend. The Puget Sound area has hosted 26 women’s weekends dating back

to 1998, providing Christian living enrichment, encouragement and support to women of all ages and stages in life. This quaint small-town venue was the perfect environment for the theme of the weekend “For Such a Time as This,” taken from the book of Esther.

Our main meeting hall was beautifully decorated in fine

linen representing the setting of the Shushan Palace. As we entered the meeting hall on Friday evening, we were asked to choose a favorite from a basket of chocolates. Each chocolate was wrapped in gold, silver, red or bronze that would determine which group we would gather in. We had the opportunity to indulge ourselves in the chocolate basket a few more times for a Get-To-Know-You activity that was excellently organized by Tina Williams, facilitated by LeeAnn Luker and followed up with a lovely vocal duet by Eva Kifer & Erin Sappington fittingly titled “For Such a Time as This.” The evening activity, decorations and special music set the tone for the weekend.

During the Sabbath morning service, we were blessed to hear from Mark Welch, who offered spiritual encouragement to live a life of forgiveness. Through the example of Jo-

seph, even Pharoah exclaimed “Can we find such a one as this?” Sophie Pebworth directed a small ladies’ choir gifting us all with a beautiful arrangement entitled “On Eagles Wings.” Sabbath afternoon, Rachel Keirouz presented an outstanding violin solo, and Barb Welch gave a thoughtful presentation entitled “For Such a Time as This—Esther and Mordecai.” Breakout sessions followed. Rounding out the Sabbath, Dawn Rose, Autumn Slocum and Christina Pate, our panel presenters, shared moving stories and lessons learned that shaped them for “such a time as this” moments in their lives. Later Christina Pate offered an encouraging vocal solo, “I Trust in You.”

Saturday evening was full of laughter as the ladies enjoyed wine, cheese, fellowship and participating in a raffle basket fundraiser that raised \$1,000,

intended as a Feast of Tabernacles gift to the women in Nigeria for a special enrichment event this year.

On Sunday, Tawnya Littlelight led an interactive open mic session to share stories of Mordecai-like mentors in the lives of our ladies, and Jessica Hendrickson presented a vocal solo based on Lamentations 3. Tina Slocum wrapped up the weekend sharing the rich and meaningful history of our valuable and uplifting women’s weekends here in the northwest. Our event was concluded by prayer and a moving song on the story of Esther called “Born for This” sung by Eva Kifer.

The bonds of friendship, laughter, tears, stories and great appreciation were shared for the opportunity to attend these women’s enrichment weekends, and many are already planning to attend again next year.

Kay Schreiber

“Be Strong and Courageous”—Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Weekend



Our Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas congregations hosted a family regional weekend with the theme “Be Strong and Courageous” March 8-10. Nearly 300 brethren from 18 different states, England and Canada gathered to deepen their connections, strengthen their faith and create memories together.

We kicked off the weekend with a scrumptious dessert social on Friday evening. On the Sabbath, fellowship hours for teens and young adults were offered as well as interactive preteen, teen and general Bible studies and a workshop for young adults related to the theme. Jeff Lockhart facilitated the general Bible study about drawing from biblical examples in order to encourage the next generation to not grow wea-

ry in doing well. Heidi Braun’s young adult workshop focused on recognizing the purpose of challenges in life and developing an action plan to overcome those difficulties, with God’s help. Matthew McDonald’s study urged teens to live courageously by choosing to do what is right, even in the most trying moments.

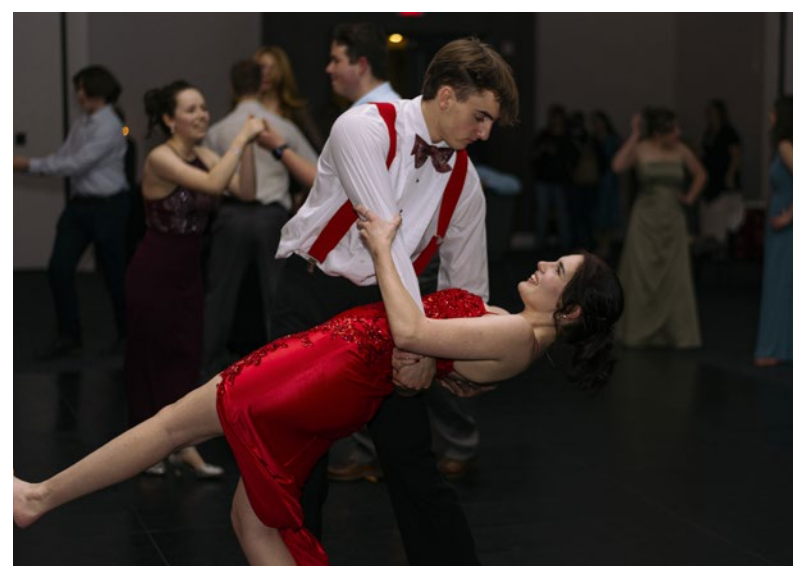
After lunch, David Jones’ sermon, “The Army of the Lord,” developed the concept of us as Christian soldiers and expounded on the important role that brethren of every age have as part of a greater body. Musical highlights included hymn accompaniment by a multigenerational instrumental ensemble and special music by teens and young adults from various states. Graduating seniors were

honored in a slideshow presentation. Members also interacted more with all four speakers in a discussion panel after services.

“The Royal Ball”-themed prom was attended by 65 teens who enjoyed a catered dinner, a photo booth, and danced the night away. Meanwhile, young adults gathered for a special dinner, fellowship and games. The remaining brethren dined together and fellowshiped while preteens enjoyed activity stations and a movie. On Sunday, brethren gathered to fellowship and play volleyball, basketball and dodgeball.

We are thankful to God for the blessing of gathering together and hope to see you all at next year’s DFW Family Weekend March 21-23, 2025!

Pedro and Jeannette Reinoso



“The Royal Ball”-themed prom (Photos by Amber Damour)

GN

The Good News

Wrestling with God

Jacob's wrestling match with God is just one example of how to wrestle with God in a respectful manner.

by Robert Berendt

The Bible details many interesting encounters humans have had with God. In Eden, we read of God walking, talking and interacting with Adam and Eve. At their creation God gave them a language, knowledge, wisdom and mental gifts that allowed for the interaction. There is no doubt that we cannot understand or compare God to ourselves in any way that makes sense. He is Almighty, we are weak. He is all wise, we are ignorant. God is always right, we are often wrong. In every encounter with God, only His love, kindness and compassion for us humans makes a positive and good interaction possible. God enjoys a positive encounter with His children. His thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). Yet, God encourages us to seek Him, call upon Him and forsake wicked ways and thoughts of unrighteousness (Isaiah 55:6-7). God so loved mankind He sent His only begotten Son to save us (John 3:16), and God has given a guideline for our thoughts and actions in the Holy Scriptures. Peter noted that we can develop the divine nature of God, and we must (2 Peter 1:4-8). God is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty (Exodus 34:6-7). We are expected to learn to think in line with God's thinking.

Jacob wrestled with God

One amazing account of interaction with God is found in Genesis 32:24-32. We read of the impossible wrestling match between Jacob and God. It seemed to last all night and God did not use much of His power, but then touched Jacob's hip and dislocated the joint.

God seems pleased that Jacob did not give up in this impossible match—and in the end blessed Jacob. It seems God rather enjoyed the determination of Jacob and the testing of his grit to persevere against great odds. Jacob had overcome much of his



Dylan Ferreira/Unsplash

We wrestle with God because we do not always understand His actions and purpose in what He allows.

humanity during the years God worked with him and it seems God tested him.

We wrestle with God

God's people today are to grow in compassion, mercy, kindness and love toward the people of this world. We are to follow the example of Jesus Christ and develop the qualities shown in 1 Corinthians 13. When we grow in these areas, we may be confronted with events that we find hard to fathom. We may not know what to do and we may question God. Christ Himself cried out to God "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" at one moment (Matthew 27:46).

We are to follow the example of Jesus Christ and develop the qualities shown in 1 Corinthians 13.

We observe human suffering, hunger, disease, warfare, physical pain and suffering and we would want to help. The very qualities God wants us to develop cry out for intervention—but we know we are helpless and only God can help. We wonder how and why God is silent as we live in a world surrounded by evil. We wrestle inwardly at times. Where is God in the face of great horrors?

Survivors of the holocaust such as Elie Wiesel said at one point, "Never will I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes" (*Witness*, by Ariel Burger). And yet, he came to realize that in fact God was always present and it is we humans who do not see the whole picture. We wrestle with God because we do not always understand His actions and purpose in what He allows. The wonder of it is that it pleases God that we wrestle in a respectful manner. He sees Himself in His children.

It pleases God when we wrestle in a respectful manner.

Job wrestled with God

Possibly one of the most notable men who wrestled with God was Job. Job loved God and was declared as blameless and a truly godly man by God (Job 1:8). But Job asked why he was treated as he was and asked what he had done that was so wrong (Job 7:17-21). During his "wrestling," Job stated he knew God was wise in heart and mighty, but if Job called, God would not answer, and if God did answer, Job would not believe God heard him (Job 9:4, 14-20). We may often feel that we wrestle with God in this way, but the wonder of this book is that God stated that all Job had spoken of Him was right (Job 42:7). Obviously, God was pleased with Job as he agonized and wrestled with his thoughts.

Abraham and Jonah wrestled with God

Abraham was one who became a friend of God and knew that it would not offend God if he questioned some of God's actions. He also walked before God in a blameless manner (Genesis 17:1). God disclosed His plan for the punishment upon Sodom and Gomorrah to Abraham, and Abraham wrestled with God about that destruction. He knew he was just dust and ashes—who was he to wrestle with God (Genesis 18:17-33)? His attitude pleased God because He could see His own heart in the words of Abraham. God, too, eschews the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). The account itself reflects honor, respect and joy on God's part. How could a man who knew what he was compared to the Almighty know it was acceptable to wrestle with God? In comparison, no doubt God was displeased with Jonah, because Jonah rejoiced in the death of the wicked (Jonah 4:11), contrary to God's nature.

Continued on page 10

Wrestling with God
Continued from page 9

Moses wrestled with God

The account of Moses who was unwilling at first, but who came to love the people of Israel, reveals several times when Moses disagreed with God. We may say in a mental or spiritual sense, Moses wrestled with God. One major incident came just after God had given Moses the instructions for Israel and Moses returned from the mountain to find the people were deep in sin. They were deserving of God's wrath, but when God told Moses to stand aside so He could consume them all and start over with Moses, Moses objected and said if God would not forgive, then he, Moses, wanted to be blotted out with them (Exodus 32:10, 32). Moses had learned love, forgiveness, mercy and compassion for these people. After all, he too was a human. God also loved Israel (Isaiah 49:14-16).

God was pleased with Moses and spoke with him face to face (Exodus 33:11). How unimaginable it is that the Almighty would sit and talk with a man face to face! God seemed to enjoy the encounters with Moses. He also enjoyed the mental wrestling when Moses said he did not want to lead them unless His Presence was with them and then also asked God how the people would know God was with him (Exodus 33:14-16). Certainly God knew that, but was pleased that Moses cared.

In another account a little more than a year later, God had brought Israel to the border of the Promised Land, but Israel had rejected God 10 times and they were not worthy of receiving the promise (Numbers 14:11-13, 20-23). God again told Moses He would destroy Israel and start again with Moses. The reply from Moses was to protect God's reputation by not destroying Israel, though God was surely fully aware of the thought Moses expressed.



CharlVera/Pixabay

Our attitude in wrestling

There are many other examples in the Scriptures that reveal God working with humans and enjoying it when their reaction is a godly one. God rejoices as He sees Himself in the words and deeds of a person. It makes an interesting biblical search to find similar examples.

When we see great evil, we may wonder where God is or why He does not intervene. It is acceptable to wonder and ask—and then wait. God tests our attitudes during times of great trials. He wants to see His own personality and thoughts mirrored in us. That clearly is a purpose for which we are created. When you wrestle with God, remember He will love your effort when made in respect and love for Him. **GN**

Nathan Durniao/Unsplash



Being hospitable is so much more than offering refreshments like coffee and cake.

Hospitality—Is it Just Coffee and Cake?

What does hospitality really mean?

by Louise Kleinbergs

Dictionary.com defines hospitality as “the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers; the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.” Harper’s Bible Dictionary (1985) similarly defines it as “the act of friendship shown a visitor.”

According to etymonline.com, hospitality comes from the Old French word *ospitalite*, meaning “hospitality, hospital” and from the Latin *hospitalitem*, meaning “friendliness to guests.” When we reflect on the concept of a hospital we see that it is not generally a planned event and is for the unexpected arrival of the sick. Similarly, while the hospitality industry itself is not focused on the sick, it is centered on entertaining “strangers or guests.”

The Bible references hospitality in a number of scriptures. Romans 12:12-13 says, “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (New International Version). The Greek word for hospitality here is *philoxenia*, which means “love of strangers.”

A bishop must be hospitable as instructed in 1 Timothy 3:2, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.” The Greek word for hospitable is *philoxenos*, meaning “loving strangers.”

When we read other scriptures a similar theme emerges and as future kings and priests we are encouraged to see that being hospitable is a role that each of us has.

Biblical customs of hospitality

According to customs in the biblical world, hospitality related to two distinct classes of people: the

“traveler” and the “resident alien.” In Israel, the law protected the “resident alien,” a foreigner who had settled permanently in the land. For us today it would be like the term “immigrant.” The “traveler,” however, was extremely vulnerable. Only God’s Law (when it was applied—see Exodus 22:21 and Jeremiah 7:6) and practicing of the customs of hospitality protected him.

The traveler had few legal or political rights in the ancient world and was largely at the mercy of local residents. By accepting the traveler, especially in providing them food, the

host also took the responsibility of protecting them and followed rituals that accompanied the practice of hospitality. This meant the guests were:

- greeted with bowing and kissing.
- offered water for washing their feet.
- given water (the act of doing this recognized them as being worthy of a peaceful reception).
- provided food and a place to rest.
- accompanied out of town a distance when leaving.

Abraham’s example of hospitality

The example of Abraham in Genesis 18 shows he followed the customs of hospitality. He:

- hurried to meet the travelers and bowed down.
- provided water so they could wash their feet.
- selected a choice calf for the guests and the household and provided a meal of the best meat, curds and milk.
- stood while his guests ate their meal (another indication of respect and honor given to strangers in the ancient world).
- walked with them for a while when they left for Sodom.

There are other examples throughout the Bible where such hospitality is practiced. 1 Peter 4:9-10 also mentions it as one of the spiritual gifts we are encouraged to develop and use to serve others.

How we can be hospitable

In our society today we may not follow all the hospitality customs of the ancient world, but we can look to integrate the principles into our life, keeping in mind the underlying key principle of hospitality is to move a stranger to a guest.

We can:

- Look out for the vulnerable—the widows, strangers and orphans.
- Consider stepping outside our comfort zone and entertaining people we don’t know. Luke 14:12-14 encourages us to invite and entertain those we don’t know.
- Pray that God uses us according to His purpose (1 Peter 4:11).

In most congregations there are some who excel in hospitality and it enriches the bonds of friendship and brotherhood immensely. We can all be grateful for those who practice this important virtue. But just imagine—what would happen if we all embraced the call to biblical hospitality? **GN**

What the Bible Says About How to Be a Godly Father

I have four adult children, ages 31-43. They still deserve a godly father, and more than ever, I want to be one for them. God the Father is obviously the best example of a godly father, and the Bible is the best source for how to be one.

by Robert Curry

On Father's Day my youngest daughter gave me a card that brought tears to my eyes, thanking me for guiding her to adulthood with wise advice and support and labeling me the G.O.A.T. Instead of the "Greatest of All Time," I feel more like the animal kind. I want to be a good father but feel like I lack in so many ways.

Proverbs 4:1-4 notes the significant fact that we are taught by our fathers. Like father, like son generally plays out. My grandpa and dad didn't know God or the Bible. They were from the strong, silent-type generation. I don't remember any special advice from either, except my grandpa would remark in our family domino games: "He who holds the pencil wins."

I never doubted that Grandpa or Daddy loved me. They both set an example of hard work and providing for family and expected us to succeed in school. We worked together after school in the family laundry and dry cleaning business. We were treated as responsible and trustworthy. My three sisters and I all ended up with solid successful lives and happy marriages. My parents allowed me to become a part of God's Church on my own, starting my junior year of high school.

Looking back at age 73, I wish I had verbally taught my children more, instead of mainly trying to teach through a good example and get them involved in God's Church, especially in the camps and youth activities, which I expected they would treasure and learn from like I did. I wish I had tried harder to do family Bible studies because in time I could have learned how to make them more interesting and motivational. Today the Church provides polished family Bible studies for youth of all ages.

Hebrews 12:10 makes a very interesting point about human fathers: "Our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how" (New Living Translation throughout except where noted, emphasis mine throughout). We can see the best in others when we allow that we probably would have done the same in the circumstances they faced.

Your best strategy to be a godly father

God created the family to be the centerpiece of His plan of salvation. If single, patiently look to God and wise counsel to provide the wife and mother for your children. If married, work together with your wife, leading her so you both seek God's guidance in all matters of child-rearing, to "bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). A wise wife can help the father avoid a man's tendency to "provoke your children to anger" (Ephesians 6:4).

It has been wisely said, "The best thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother." This quote is attributed to either Abraham Lincoln or Theodore Hesburgh, but it's a biblical truth that a father's priority has got to be God first, then his relationship with his wife. Godly parents are key to rearing godly children who honor their parents and in time will hopefully transition to also loving God their Father.

Plead, encourage and urge

In 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Paul writes: "And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God

Pay attention to how God our Father treats us

Notice Hebrews 12:5-7: "And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as His children? . . . 'For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child' . . . Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?"

"The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust" (Psalm 103:13-14).

Every child is different and needs to be worked with individually to support their needs and personality. One of the best ways for a wise father to get to know his kids is to read to them and share activities. I treasure the memory of my daddy taking time to play baseball with me when he came home tired from work and hungry for supper. Many weekends he took our family boating and waterskiing at nearby Blue Lake. Easily the biggest and happiest surprise was when I looked out at high school graduation and saw my dad—in a suit!

Model and teach the entire book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is a father's instruction to his child (Proverbs 1:4, 8).

Proverbs 3:12 makes a foundational point: A father will be most effective if he delights in his child—rather than rues the day. "I'm doing this because I love you" will work if they know you do. My daddy and grandpa never said they loved me, but I knew they did. Saying "I love you" and hugging doesn't come naturally for me, but a father should say it and do it—often. It gets easier. Your wife and kids will thrive on it!

Proverbs 22:6 is the classic proverb to encourage a parent, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." If you know the disappointment—

yes, guilt—of having kids who have stopped going to Church, trust your Heavenly Father to guide your children to fulfill His plan of "a future and a hope" for them in His master timing (Jeremiah 29:11). Hopefully, they received the Blessing of Little Children. Don't ever give up on them and continue to build your treasured relationship.

Thanks to you being a member of God's Church, God considers your children to be holy and set apart (1 Corinthians 7:14; Acts 2:39). You can do all you can to lead them down God's path, but you can't accept God's calling for them. They must choose to accept their invitation and seek God's Kingdom and righteousness. But thanks to you taking on the challenge of having children, they have this awesome opportunity!

Let's look to our loving Heavenly Father and the instruction in His Word! If we honor Him, as the Fifth Commandment instructs, it's more likely that our kids will find us honorable and choose to worship the God we have pointed them toward.

There is no doubt that being a godly father is a tall order. Let's reach for it! **GN**



Godly parents are key to rearing godly children.

would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his Kingdom and glory." The New King James puts it: "we exhorted, and comforted, and charged..."

Speaking of "charged" (although with a different meaning), the latest inflation-adjusted cost of raising a middle-class two-parent child to age 18 is more than \$310,000, not counting college! That would total \$1,240,000 for a parent, like me, with four children! I'm pretty sure I've never been anywhere near that much money except when our family toured the U.S. Mint in Washington, D.C. Raising a godly family should encourage parents that, despite money struggles through the years, God provides for our needs (Philippians 4:19). Paul said, "Parents provide for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you" (2 Corinthians 12:14-15). The joy of kids is the true wealth to aim for.

Aim is an appropriate word picture because God says: "Children are a gift from the Lord . . . a reward . . . like arrows in a warrior's hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). A father will need the skills taught in the Bible and by experience to guide them to the target.

To Serve or Be Served—That is the Question

When you come to Church, do you come to serve or to be served?

by Gary Antion

What do waitresses, janitors, gas station attendants, zookeepers, lawn care attendants and taxi drivers have in common? All are working in service positions! Unfortunately, these necessary jobs tend to be looked down upon as meager and inferior by others.

Yet, there have been some very noteworthy and famous servants delineated in the Scriptures—to name a few, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Caleb, Joshua, Samson, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jonah, Isaiah, Paul, Mary, the prophets, Aaron and the priests.

In Matthew 20:20-28, Mrs. Zebedee sought special treatment for her sons. She wanted one of them to sit on Jesus' right hand and the other on His left in the Kingdom. However, as we read in Romans 12:1, we learn that desiring to be servants is more pleasing to God.

When you come to Church, do you come to serve or to be served? That's the question I hope to address in this article.

Jesus' example

When Christ came to earth, He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7). As Mark 10:45 explains, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus came to serve! We can see that He set the example of service when He washed His disciples' feet on Passover night (John 13:4-16).

Seeking to be served

Before we consider what it is to be a servant, let's examine some examples of the opposite—someone who seeks to be served.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 explains that to be self-centered and self-serving is a mark of the perilous times in the last days. Luke 12:16-21 warns of taking care of oneself instead of sharing with others—the man in this example died before he was able to appreciate all of the wealth he had saved for himself. Romans 16:18 denounces self-serving, as it is not of service to Jesus Christ.

God used the prophet Elisha to heal the Syrian Naaman, yet Elisha refused to take any reward for

doing so. However, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, secretly ran after Naaman and asked for goods for himself. 2 Kings 5:15-27 details the contrast between these two attitudes.

The account of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) describes how both a Jew and a priest passed right by the injured man. The only person who took the time to serve was a Samaritan.

Seeking to serve

Let's now look at God's Word for teachings about serving! We read "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). In Romans 12:1, we learn that it is reasonable to serve. One way to serve is to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).



Love should be our motivation for serving, and serving is a method by which we show love.

We are in the same Body, and it is an honor to care for one another! "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you;' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those mem-

Remember, it's Christ whom you are ultimately serving!

bers of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:20-26). (See also Ephesians 4:15-16).

Love should be our motivation for serving (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Galatians 5:13), and serving is a method by which we show love (1 John 3:16-18). Beyond mere actions, service includes taking an interest in others (Philippians 2:3-4). It's important to ensure that we serve in areas where we are prepared, not just willing, to serve. The Good Samaritan, for instance, had the means. He was able to perform first aid, treating the man's wounds with oil and wine and bandaging him (Luke 10:34). He also had a donkey for transportation, and the money to pay for the man's stay at the inn (Luke 10:34-35). We can follow this example and prepare now to be ready to serve when the opportunity arises.

Remember, it's Christ whom you are ultimately serving! "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Two men who exemplified service were Timothy and Epaphroditus. As Paul wrote of them, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly."

"Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sor-

row. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me" (Philippians 2:19-30).

Conclusion

Christ asked the question, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:45-47).

If we choose to serve in this manner, we can look forward to Christ's words to the sheep on his right hand in Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." GN

“Our Walk with God”—Women’s Weekend



The Portland, Oregon congregation hosted their annual Women’s Enrichment Weekend from March 22-24. Our theme was “Our Walk With God” based on the latter part of Ephesians 4:1. We have been called to walk with God as we live in this world, but are not a part of it. The path each of us is on leads towards the Kingdom of God and we are all at various places on this walk through life.

We met at the beautiful Canby Grove facility, surrounded by mature Douglas fir trees, walking trails and a flowing river. This weekend was attended by about 70 women who stayed overnight for the whole weekend and a higher attendance in the 90s on the Sabbath day. The weekend began with a mixer as women arrived, and after dinner we enjoyed a “Fellowship Breakout Session” with questions that sparked discussions including: Why is spiritual fellowship important? What are some barriers that prevent us from connecting? What are

some practical ways that we can overcome these barriers?

In addition to the ladies on-site, the Sabbath sessions and activities were attended via Zoom by women who couldn’t attend in person at Canby Grove. Some gathered in small groups, and this allowed them to participate with us and be uplifted and encouraged as well.

Sabbath services included beautiful special music and featured Lewis VanAusdle as the guest minister from New York City. The theme of his message was that we are to walk out of the darkness that hides and into Christ’s glorious light, revealing that our walk is in God’s timing.

Lena VanAusdle, our feature speaker in the afternoon, shared three impactful stories from her life. Following Lena’s presentation, a panel of three speakers shared their unique experiences in their walk with God and how He works with each of us personally when we need Him.

After sundown, the popular not-so-silent auction began.

This year the money raised went to support a Good Works project in Bangladesh. The small group of Church members are seeking funds to drill a well and build a wall on the property that will house a church building in the future. Through God’s loving hand, we raised over \$3,000 to contribute to this project!

On Sunday morning Celia Bradley from the Bellevue, Washington congregation, led an activity that began with us getting into the same break-out teams we had been on Friday evening. Each team was given four pages of 10 trivia questions about women of God in the Bible, and we had 10 minutes to work on each page. This activity brought out some definite competition from various members on each team!

We headed home from the weekend inspired and encouraged, looking forward to next year when we will meet again at Canby Grove for the women’s enrichment weekend.

Patty Sexton

Our Walk With God

by Amber Henke

Our walk with God
How lovely it can be.
To walk beside Him beneath the trees
Or hand in hand across the sand
A beautiful journey it’s sure to be.

But then one day calamity strikes
Leaving you knee deep in trials and strife.
God is still with you holding your hand
And if you shall fall, He can help you to stand.

But you must humble yourself and follow His Lead
In order to see where He has planned for you to be.

The Kingdom is our goal
So no matter the trial
We must stay true to His calling and trust like a Child.
We can inherit nothing without this key trait.
Remember we are His children and it is not too late.
Turn your feet towards Him and walk in His way.
Inherit the Kingdom that He has promised you one day.

Ambassador Bible College Charity Auction Supports School in Benin



What do bluebirds, singing cucumbers, and raining frogs have in common? They were all sights at the 2024 Ambassador

Bible College charity auction! To support the construction of a women’s French-language literacy school in Porto Novo, Benin,

the ABC class of 2024 pulled out all of the stops to create a fun and engaging experience.

From popcorn and film reels on the walls to a red carpet on the floor, the decorating team transformed the building to capture the auction’s “TV Station” theme. The acts provided a variety of entertainment similar to what one would encounter while flipping through their television guide at home. Sports fans could witness the game of the century between the Old and New Testament on “The Bible NBA.” In contrast, drama fans could get a look into the lives of well-known ladies in “The New Housewives of the Bible.” There were also

commercials, news broadcasts, music videos and many more types of entertainment for audience members.

These “channels” were pulled together with the hilarious antics of Tianna Tran and Reagan Mango, who played celebrity guest “Larry the Cucumber.” Alongside the moderation, Christopher Pacleb and Jackson Holloway served as auctioneers who sold delicious baked goods. Peanut butter and chocolate buckeyes, a bourbon cake, frosted jelly sugar cookies and Mrs. Antion’s famous baklava were just a tiny taste of the wonderful desserts that the brethren donated.

With the addition of the

silent auction, the event raised over \$8,000 for women’s literacy in Benin, and guests could go home with happy hearts and full stomachs.

The 2024 charity auction was certainly an event to remember, and with guest stars such as Jelly, Stephen “Bob the Tomato” Bouchette and Scott Buchanan, a great team of entertainers was assembled. While it stands to be seen whether or not the event will be taking home any Emmys, the ABC class of 2024 is incredibly grateful for everyone who provided their support by donating their time, money or delicious cooking. For now, “That’s all, folks!”

Stephanie Herridge

Rick Beam



Rick Beam, pastor of the United Church of God congregations in Rome (Georgia), Chattanooga (Tennessee) and Gadsden (Alabama) died on March 31 after a hard-fought battle with pancreatic cancer. Rick was a wonderful, dedicated servant who served God and our brethren faithfully for over 50 years, and now awaits the resurrection.

Rick was a dedicated, loving, and strong leader both for his family and the many brethren he served. He was the friend and brother that you sought in times of trial, adversity and tribulation. His door was always open to receive those who needed the wisdom of his counsel, and to help point them in the right direction. He was a devoted father, husband and Papa.

Rick is survived by his wife of nearly 50 years, Angela Wray Beam; his three children Leigh-Anne, Jonathan, Loren; two daughter-in-laws Sally and Bridgette; as well as three grandchildren Josiah, Bronson and Annalyse.

Mavis Kirk



Mavis Kirk died peacefully on Wednesday evening, April 3, surrounded by her family. She was 99 years old and had been baptized for more than 64 years. Mavis was the widow of elder Steve Kirk, and they served the congregation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Mavis was born on June 11, 1924 in Maud, Oklahoma to Marion Franklin and Mary Magdalene Pounders Collum.

Mavis is survived by her son, Carey Kirk and wife, Connie, of Fitzhugh; three daughters, Brenda Phillips, of Ada, Darlene Mischnick, of Mineola, Texas, and Angela Marvin, of Ada; several grandchildren (five generations); and other loving relatives and friends.

Mavis is preceded in death by her parents; husband, Steve; two daughters, Irene Davis and Ellen Barnett; and two sons, Dwain Kirk and Vinson Kirk.

Her crown is won. She now sleeps awaiting Christ's return along with her devoted and late husband, Steve.

William Vernich



Bill Vernich died on April 3 of health complications at age 92. Mr. Vernich was an elder who served the congregations in Nashville, Murfreesboro and Jackson (Tennessee), and Bowling Green (Kentucky).

Bill served in the U.S. Army from 1953-1955. While he was home on leave visiting a friend, he met Carol Whiteman and it was love at first sight: they were married in 1956. Bill and Carol have five children and seven grandchildren.

Bill heard The World Tomorrow radio broadcast, and was sold on God's truth; he was baptized in 1972, and became an elder in 1984. He worked in management for the Kroger Grocery Company and later for the Resource Energy Services Company as a marketing representative. Through the years, Bill loved to play golf when he could. But, most of all, Bill was a leader and servant in the Church. Bill was very much loved and will always be missed.

Recommended Video Series: The Path to Pentecost



Are you looking for a Bible tool to enhance your study leading up to Pentecost?

This seven-part *BT Extra* series will show you how the resurrected Jesus Christ began to work with His disciples in the period after His resurrection, a critical moment in the lives of those who had followed Him for more than three years.

Presented by Darris McNeely, this series is given in 10-minute videos that are easy to watch on the go. The series includes:

- Encounter in the Garden
- The Road to Emmaus
- Dealing with Doubt and Unbelief
- In Galilee, by the Sea
- The Great Commission
- You Shall Receive Power
- Out, Into the Streets!

Watch the series online:



Seattle YA Weekend



Hello, young adults! We are pleased to invite you to our fourth young adult weekend in the Seattle area. Come join a group of like-minded young adults sharing meals, spiritual conversation and fun together in the picturesque Cle Elum, Washington. This year, our theme is Reconciliation. We'll be focusing on the various aspects of reconciliation: with God and with each other. How do we build and rebuild our relationships in meaningful ways? The weekend will be a mix of seminars, discussions and activities all located at the Big House Lodge in Cle Elum. There will be both camping and in-house lodging options. For more details and to sign up, visit tinyurl.com/seattleya24. Looking forward to seeing you all soon! **UN**

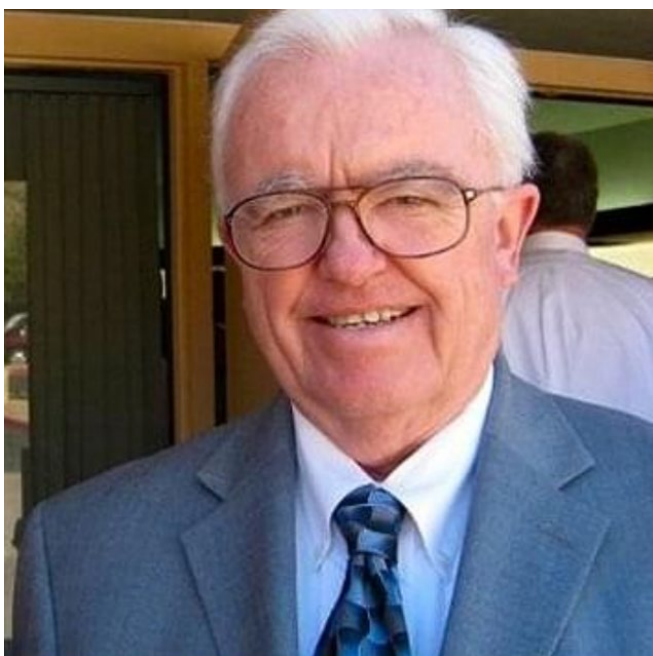
by Jennifer Olson

The Bible Fund was a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization that existed exclusively for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. Contributions received were used for projects in developing countries as follows:

- **Religious:** Distribution of Bibles and Church literature in Angola and Brazil.
- **Educational support:** The purchase and distribution of textbooks in Church schools in Angola and Namibia.
- **Humanitarian projects:** First aid and nutritional support.

In honor of the legacies of Graham Davies, William Scott and Hernan Herrera and those who have supported The Bible Fund throughout the years, we would like to pass our remaining assets to the United Church of God's international work to continue the work that Jesus Christ commissioned us to do. Here is our history:

J. Graham Davies



Graham Davies worked in the Portuguese department of the Worldwide Church of God. He learned the Portuguese language in Brazil, where his parents were missionaries. He began attending Ambassador College in 1959. He served as the chairman of The Bible Fund until his death in March 2021.

William G. Scott



The Bible Fund, an organization which collected and distributed Bibles and other educational and humanitarian materials, recently donated their remaining assets to United Church of God. This article, written by Jennifer Olson, provides a brief history of the fund and legacies of those who made this program possible. **UN**

William Scott worked as the campus draftsman and architect for the Worldwide Church of God for 34 years. He began attending Ambassador College in 1964. He served on the board as the treasurer, and later the chairman, of The Bible Fund until his death in November 2023.

Hernan Herrera



Hernan Herrera worked in the Personal Correspondence Department of the Worldwide Church of God for 16 years. He began attending Ambassador College in 1971. He served on the board as the counselor/editor of The Bible Fund until his death in July 2023.

How It All Started

On a visit to Angola in 2001, the founder of The Bible Fund, Graham Davies, was shocked to discover the effects of the protracted civil war that Angola had undergone since 1974. (The war ended in February 2002.) Many refugees not only lacked food and clothing but also Bibles. They could barely afford their daily meals, much less the purchase of Bibles.

After the war, there were many ex-soldiers and other refugees in a state of famine. This included Church members who would eventually be affiliated with The Bible Fund. Many of those Church members were in desperate need of clothing, food and shelter.

Graham had been corresponding with members of this group since the early '90s. Upon being informed of the Angolan group's disenfranchisement from the parent organization of the Worldwide Church of God in the United States, it was decided to establish a fund so that the members of this ostracized group could receive charitable funds. As a direct result, The Bible Fund was formed in August 2002.

The Overall Purpose of the Fund

The Bible Fund was committed to distributing Bibles freely in developing countries. The fund also sup-

ported educational development and humanitarian services such as relief aid and medical and entrepreneurial projects to encourage self-support for local churches of the IDDOE (Igreja de Deus, Organismo Espiritual).

This commitment of purpose is based on the supreme example of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who not only preached His message of the good news of the coming Kingdom of God to the poor, but He also fed them physical food when they were hungry. In Mark's account of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, we read that "Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things" (6:34).

Later in that same chapter quoted above, we read that the disciples wanted to send the people away, but Jesus said, "You give them something to eat" (verse 37). Further on in His ministry, He said that many of these people followed Him just to get some physical food to eat. Unlike some faithless modern religionists of our day, who warn us about feeding the people who attend the church gatherings, Jesus fed them anyway! We are to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21).

God's Promise to Us

In our Bible distribution, we were encouraged by promises that God has given us concerning what happens when His Word is made available: "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

The spreading of that Word among the poor in developing countries is producing much fruit. Lives are being changed; people are finding how to contact the Provider who has promised to supply their needs.

How We Were Supported

The Bible Fund was not a church, nor was it sponsored by any church organization; however, its supporters were members of the spiritual organism that is actively seeking to fulfill the mandates of Jesus Christ.

Who Benefited From These Funds?

Soon after the founding of the fund, the directors realized that it need not be limited to just one country, but could reach out to all countries in the developing nations needing this type of assistance.

Beneficiaries of these funds were thousands of ordinary people in Angola, Brazil, Pakistan, Namibia and other countries. Our funds provided some relief in these impoverished areas and gave the people spiritual hope.

We learned that the United Church of God is supporting many of these same brethren, and we wish for our remaining assets to continue to support them. **UN**

Teaching your kids at home doesn't have to be done alone! A homeschool co-op can help!

from Ministerial and Member Services

Every family must assess their needs and abilities when considering their children's education. This informational guide may be beneficial if you are considering homeschooling. It explains what a co-op is, how it works and how to join or start one.

If you're a parent or teacher who is considering sharing skills, providing social opportunities for your children and networking with other parents while teaching your kids at home, a homeschool co-op could be a special opportunity!

What is a Homeschool Co-op?

The choice to homeschool your children can present both challenges and blessings. Teaching children a broad variety of subjects across multiple grades can be daunting, so many parents have turned to homeschool co-ops to supplement their children's education.

A homeschool co-op is a group of families who meet regularly and combine resources to help meet the educational and social needs of their children. Many families choose to combine traditional homeschooling methods with membership in one of these groups, and some church congregations have even started their own co-ops.

The purpose of a homeschool co-op is often multifaceted. A homeschool co-op can be a much-needed resource for homeschooling parents who need subjects taught that are outside their comfort level or time available to teach. These groups often offer classes such as physical education, art, speech, language arts, writing, math, government and science. Especially at the high school level, having a co-op that offers higher-level math and science (with labs) can be an incredible help for parents.

For students, co-ops offer social interaction and the opportunity to work with other students in group situations. Learning how to work within a group is a much-needed life and career skill. Team learning can be especially hard to practice in a home setting with few other students.

A homeschool co-op can function in many ways. Some homeschool co-ops are geared towards facilitating social interactions for kids. These co-ops may keep it very simple and offer more social opportunities: play dates, field trips, dances, art classes, karate, gymnastics, etc. The primary design is to give parents and kids the opportunity to do group activities. Additionally, co-ops can help negotiate lower prices for classes within the community which might be too expensive for individual families. One homeschool mom shared, "Our family has taken part in gymnastics classes, taekwondo, archery, 4-H riflery, ballet and other classes through

co-ops that were able to get us a much lower price that made those classes affordable to us."

Other co-ops are run more like a school setting. They will offer an array of classes that are on a schedule. Usually, you can sign your student(s) up for one or multiple classes within the co-op. One example is a co-op that was run by a professor from a local university. He ran his group like a college, allowing students to sign up for courses scheduled throughout an eight-hour day. Students could sign up for a one-hour course or up to eight hours of classes. This is one of the more structured examples—most co-ops have a somewhat looser structure.

What is it Like to be in a Co-op?

No two homeschool co-ops are exactly alike. There are many options to consider when choosing a group for your family or starting your own.

A homeschool co-op varies in curriculum and classes. Co-ops will usually offer a range of classes for a range of ages, elementary through high school. For the younger ages, subjects such as art, physical education, history and science may be the main focus. For older students, co-ops can provide help with classes such as science

Homeschool co-ops often meet in a local church building that has open classrooms available during the week. Some co-ops meet in homes. For specific classes like archery or taekwondo, participants meet at those specific locations.

Joining a Co-op

It's important to consider the pros and cons of joining a group with a religious affiliation. Some homeschool co-ops are secular, and others are labeled as Christian. Since there are benefits and disadvantages of each, it's important to determine which would be the best fit for your family and the unique considerations that come with our beliefs in the Church.

The secular co-ops try to leave faith out of the equation. This can make it easier for those of various faith backgrounds or those without a religious background to join. You are not required to attend a specific church or share a set of faith-based beliefs to be a part of the group. Much like a public school, these groups will represent many different beliefs and lifestyles.

Christian co-ops can be geared towards members of a particular faith. The group organizers can define them

however they want. Some are more general "Christian" co-ops that are open to people of different faith backgrounds. They tend to focus more on common values and shared morals. However, even these types of co-ops often include an agreement which must be signed to show that you agree with and support their "Statement of Faith." This almost always includes a statement about belief in the Trinity. Sometimes it is possible to negotiate an alternative agreement with the organizers. However, this is not a given.

The membership cost should be considered when joining a group. There is usually a fee associated with joining a co-op. This could cost something like \$25 per family per year or \$25 per student per year. In addition to the membership fee, there is generally a "class fee." Some classes may be

relatively inexpensive, charging \$10-25 per student per class to offset the costs of supplies. Other classes, especially classes with labs, may cost several hundred dollars per student. Many groups fundraise to help offset the costs of running the co-op and to keep membership costs down.

Some co-ops are almost as expensive as private schools. These tend to be run more like a private school. Others may charge tuition of well over \$1,000 per student per year with a fee schedule based on class credits.

Because of the costs associated with joining a co-op, some parents have considered starting their own homeschool group. However, depending on your budget, joining an existing group can save time or may be more convenient if a family already has many other time commitments.

Starting a Co-op

Starting a local church co-op can be very beneficial to families in your congregation. If homeschooling feels overwhelming, you may have considered starting your own co-op to share support with other families and develop lasting relationships. We interviewed two homeschool moms who shared how their respective

Pixabay



labs, SAT prep and advanced math. Subjects that are taught well in a one-on-one setting, such as reading, are usually taught at home.

Classes in the co-op are usually taught by parents who have an affinity for or expertise in a subject. The number of subjects offered will depend on the size of your co-op and your pool of students. Some co-ops offer a very defined focus, offering only classes such as science or math. Most often, a wider range of classes is available.

The curriculum is often chosen by the person teaching the class. Some major homeschool curriculum companies commonly used in the co-op setting include: Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW), Apologia Science and Math-U-See. Finding a curriculum, however, is not difficult. It can be more challenging to narrow down which of the available options to use.

Meeting frequencies and locations may differ by group. Most co-ops meet once per week. The students gather for the class portion and complete their coursework at home throughout the rest of the week. It's rare that co-op classes entirely replace at-home learning. Most parents enroll their students in a few co-op classes and teach the rest at home. Many parents find value in choosing the curriculum and personally teaching their children as much as possible.

congregations started homeschool co-ops and how these groups benefited families in their areas.

The Candlesticks Academy

Liz Creech, a pastor's wife and mom in the Indianapolis, Indiana congregation shared the following:

"The co-op began after holding a meeting to gauge interest. Parents and a few additional adults in the congregation were willing to offer their time to provide classes for the kids, so we decided to go for it. We began in the middle of the school year, which was not ideal, but decided to use this as a time to iron out any bumps in the co-op organization and process. We meet at the Indianapolis church hall and supplies have been provided by the parents who are teaching a certain subject. The children decided on our logo and name.

"This year, we met once a month. Ultimately, we decided to have 40-minute classes with a five-minute break in between. Classes begin at 10:30 a.m. and end at 2:30 p.m. with a 30-minute lunch. Children age five and under meet in a separate classroom to work on age-appropriate skills. Ages 6-13 work in a large room together. The subjects offered are history, science, art, language arts/writing and community service. Sports are offered and coached by volunteer parents. This past winter and spring the kids played basketball and learned the fundamentals of that. All children are welcome to join us for any part of the co-op that they can, even if they are not homeschooled.

"Parents or local brethren sign up to teach a class with an agreed-upon theme. We have had different countries be our theme, Women's History Month, etc. We all use different curriculums to homeschool our children, so no specific curriculum for the co-op is used.

"The children are expected to be respectful, helpful and engaged. They love spending time together so keeping their attention means teachers also must be engaging and encouraging. All students are on different levels academically, so floating assistants are extremely helpful in the workspace.

"We will be holding a meeting at our next co-op to discuss next year's plans. Making sure everyone is on the same page is vital to the success of the co-op. Not everyone is expected to teach each week; it is really designed for just the opposite. However, all parents should be active participants in helping the co-op be edifying for all.

"One issue we have had is that parents or children who do not homeschool have had hurt feelings regarding the co-op. They feel as if they are being left out of the fun. Navigating this has been slightly difficult as they look at it as a church activity when it really is not meant to be. However, all children are welcome to join us at any time they are able to. We certainly do not want to cause a rift between homeschooled and non-homeschooled children at church.

"We have had few costs associated with the co-op thus far due to parents handling supplies. We will most likely need to fundraise for next year to pay for any field trips, supplies or extras needed."

Ripple Homeschool Co-op

Valerie Creech, a homeschool mom in the Cincinnati East, Ohio congregation shared the following:

"The purpose of Ripple (our co-op) is to get together with those of like minds and form lasting friendships while covering core subjects in a fun and engaging way. A few of us who homeschool in the congregation were thinking about joining a different homeschool co-op together. After looking into it I decided it was not the best fit for our family. It was quite expensive and there were so many activities that we would not attend, due to our beliefs.

"At Ripple we wanted to provide the option to get together once a week during the school year. Twice

dren at their levels. I'm hoping to be able to provide a better setup for high school age students next year. Any younger siblings are always welcome to attend.

"Because I wanted all in the congregation to be able to attend and we have been blessed to rent a room free of charge, we have not had a fee to participate. After running the co-op for several months, I have found that it is not easy to provide supplies for around 20 children without any dedicated funds. We decided it would be best to do a fundraiser to help offset the cost of supplies and field trips, for those who need assistance.

"The mission statement for this particular homeschool co-op reads as follows: 'At Ripple we strive to be a small stone in creating a fun, safe space where lasting friendships are formed and minds are engaged. We do this by providing opportunities to get together with others of like-mind, covering core subjects with activities that complement learning at home. Twice a month we have more structured time to focus on a theme with hands-on activities that complete our curriculum. The other two weeks each month learning is done through exploring the world around us with field trips and service projects.'"

Additional Notes

There are some aspects of starting a co-op that can be challenging. In most areas, the members are so spread out that even if you have multiple families homeschooling, they are not close enough to get together regularly. To help remedy this, some parents have joined online support groups, such as "Train Up a Child," a Facebook group for Church of God families.

Other families have been unable to start a co-op because of the time commitment it requires. Because homeschooling can already be expensive, perhaps the best way a congregation can support families in smaller or more spread-out church areas could be to help members afford a local co-op rather than start one for in their local UCG congregation.

Perhaps the best way to overcome these challenges is to collaborate with others. As discussed earlier, some UCG homeschool co-ops welcome families from other Church of God groups. In some cases, you might be able to start a group with others in your neighborhood who are willing to be respectful of your family's beliefs and scheduling needs for the Sabbath and Holy Days.

Consider checking with your local library. While it isn't an official co-op, many homeschool families meet regularly at the library for classes such as chess, Spanish and robotics. Some may even meet to plan field trips. A librarian at a local public library may be a good resource for locating other homeschool parents in the area and group activities your family could join.

Despite the potential challenges, a homeschool co-op offers many benefits to its members. Choosing to educate your children at home is no small task, but working with a group of others with similar goals can help make it easier. So if you're interested in starting or joining a homeschool co-op, we'd encourage you to take the first step! We pray that your homeschool co-op journey will be a blessing to your whole family. **UN**



Cottonbro Studio/Pexels

monthly we rent a free room from a civic center for two hours and have more structured time. We start by introducing the theme for the day with a game/skit or short lesson on the topic. We break into groups and have three or four stations set up to provide hands-on experiences to cover our curriculum. We end each session with a group activity. We held a meeting at the beginning of the semester to decide themes for each week. We choose core topics trying to provide fun, engaging activities to supplement learning that is done at home, while also honing in on talents/passions that our moms/teachers have. Some of the topics we have covered are: Feast of Tabernacles show and tell, Mayflower (Thanksgiving), space, 50 states, Ohio, health, service, simple machines, famous artists, etc.

"I set up a Facebook group to organize and plan our events. The moms of the group take turns leading our meetings, setting up the Facebook event and planning the group activities for the day. In the Facebook event we post a schedule and activities we plan to cover. Moms volunteer for stations they would like to run and plan the activity and bring the supplies. The weeks we don't meet at the civic center we plan field trips and service projects.

"I have limited participants to Church of God families. Although our main subjects are not biblical lessons, God is at the center of everything we do. I also wanted this opportunity to be a time for friendships to be nurtured. Church is our life and I wanted my kids to be surrounded with others striving to follow God's way. Anyone of school age is welcome to participate, although most of our lessons have been geared towards elementary/middle school age. Depending on the subjects we have different stations set up to try to engage the chil-

Credits:

Ministerial and Member Services: Steve Myers
Writers: Joy Jones, Liz Creech, Valerie Creech, Heidi Braun

Brown County Pentecost Weekend



Called the “Little Smokies” because of its resemblance to the Great Smoky Mountains, Brown County State Park and the Abe Martin Lodge in beautiful southern Indiana will host Sabbath and Pentecost services June 15-16. The weekend, following a tradition of worship, fellowship and song, will fea-

ture the popular annual Concert for God on Saturday evening, followed by a hymn sing. The park’s rustic Abe Martin Lodge offers accommodations that include lodge rooms, cabins, dining and conference facilities (including the Melodeon Room, where services will again take place) and an indoor water park.

A traditional Sabbath afternoon potluck will take place on June 15 at the Upper Shelter (details to follow) and a pre-paid option for Pentecost lunch (between services) will again be available.

Discounted rates for the United Church of God were set for a group block of 121 rooms and cabins, ranging from \$89.59

(small rustic cabin room) to \$223.99 (family cabin with full kitchen), plus tax. This year the UCG block includes the new cabin suites (\$235.99). A full complement of rooms with queen and king beds (some including patio access) to family cabins (sleep eight) are available. Rooms and cabins can be viewed online at: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/inns/abe-martin-lodge-at-brown-county-state-park/lodging-and-amenities/>

Note: for those who would desire extra time over the weekend, the park extended the group discount to include options of arriving Thursday, June 13 through Sunday evening June 16 (Monday, June 17 morning checkout).

If you would like to participate in the Concert for God, please contact Sam Howie at tigersh13@yahoo.com or Tim Howie at howietim@hotmail.com. To make reservations, you can call to make reservations: 877-563-4371 and use group code 0615CG (zero-six-one-five-C-G) or go online and use the same group number. The group rate will end and rooms will be released to the public on May 15. Note: reservations under the group rate will be made on a first-come, first-served basis.

Additional details of speakers and the weekend schedule will be forthcoming.

If you have questions, email Jamie Snyder at jamie@themekgroup.com **UN**

Family Camp 2024—United Kingdom



Family camp will be held from Sunday, Aug. 4 to Sunday, Aug. 11, 2024. This will be held at a venue new to us this year, Dalesdown, near Horsham, West Sussex.

For more information about this year's camp, the pricing structure and an application form, please contact the team

at camp@ucg.org.uk. We anticipate another popular event.

Family camp is about getting our children and young people together for a week in the summer holidays to meet new people, strengthen existing relationships, learn new skills and learn about God and His plan. Campers of any age

can attend. The activities at camp are normally best suited to those aged 8-18. Because we have younger children attending, we run the camp as a "family camp," where parents(s) are also in attendance and retain overall responsibility for their children while at camp. **UN**

Troyer’s Hollow Campout

Mark your calendars for the Annual Troyer’s Hollow Campout on June 21-23, 2024! Nestled in the scenic hills of Amish Country near Charm, Ohio, Troyer’s Hollow in the Doughty Valley has a long tradition within the local community and the church as a relaxing retreat.

A beautiful creek winds through the secluded canyon hollow where we will camp. We have the entire property for two days, and one side on Sunday. Activities planned include a Friday evening Bible study (8 p.m.), Sabbath potluck at noon,

Sabbath services (2 p.m.), kettle popcorn over the fire and many campfire discussions.

The campground has covered pavilions with a small kitchen, nicely maintained bathrooms and shower facilities. Tent camping is most popular, though there are a few RV/camper sites. There are also hotels in the area for brethren who are non-campers. Please contact Mary Miller or Susan Miller to make your reservations, especially for RVs and campers.

Please plan to provide your

own meals and drinks, aside from the Sabbath potluck where everyone shares in providing and enjoying the meal with abundance. Alcohol is prohibited on the property. Don’t forget your camping chairs!

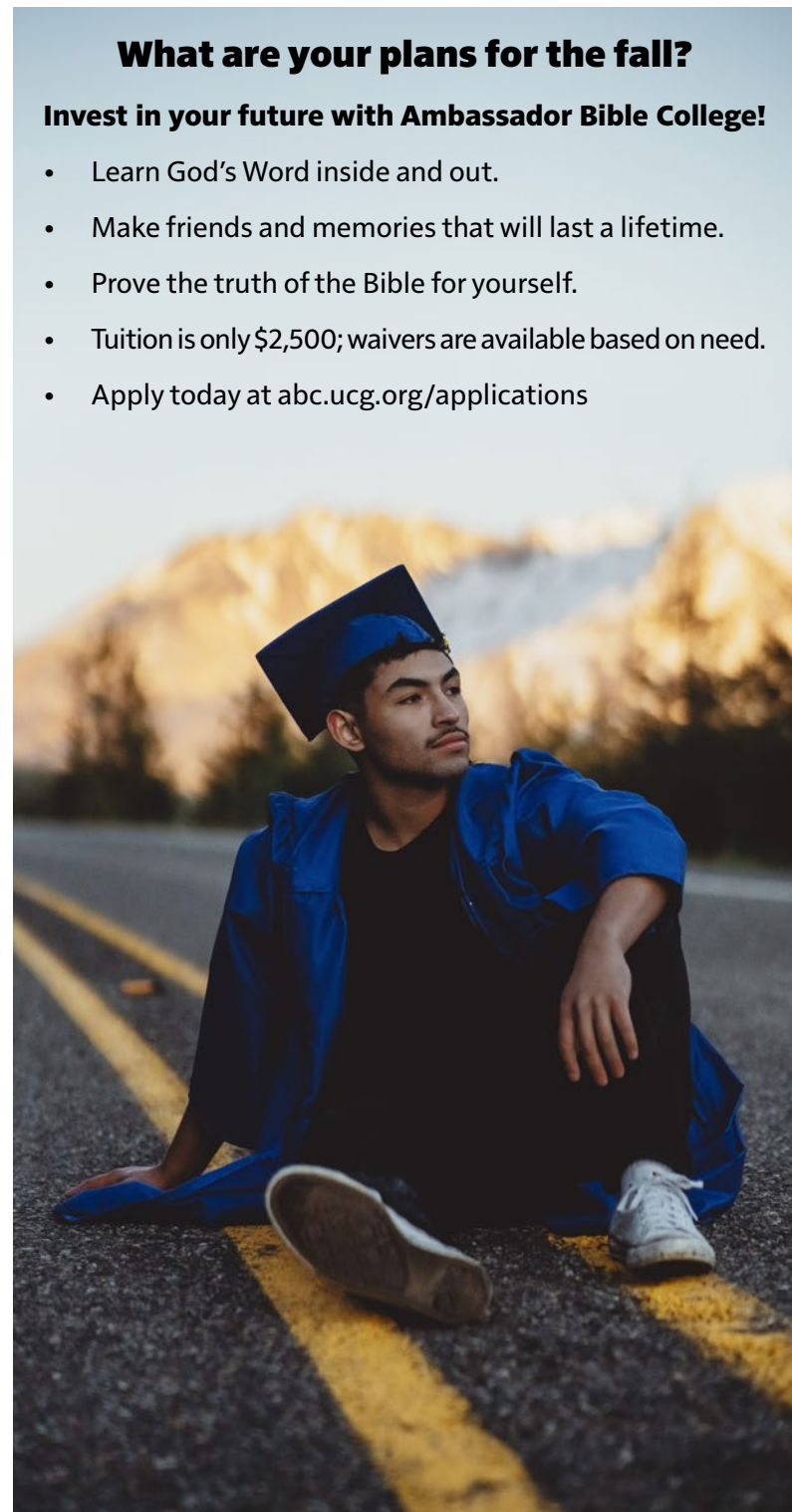
Cost: by donation (a donation box will be available)

Arrival is on Friday, June 21 after 3 p.m. and departure is on Sunday, June 23 by 2 p.m. If you wish to come, or just have questions, please contact Mary Miller (mary@crawfordmfg.com, 330-204-6972) or Susan Miller (330-204-1756). **UN**

What are your plans for the fall?

Invest in your future with Ambassador Bible College!

- Learn God’s Word inside and out.
- Make friends and memories that will last a lifetime.
- Prove the truth of the Bible for yourself.
- Tuition is only \$2,500; waivers are available based on need.
- Apply today at abc.ucg.org/applications



Teens

“Money Management 101,” an article by Becky Sweat, offers some tips for saving and spending your hard-earned cash.



Young Adults

Where do true purpose and meaning come from? Listen to this sermon by Len Martin to learn more about living a life with purpose.



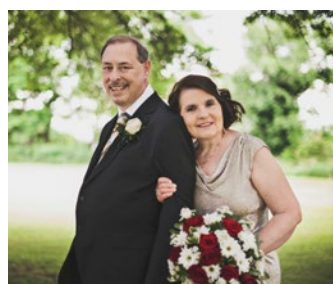
Students

God has blessed each and every one of us with wonderful talents, great or small. How can we best use them to serve God and His people?



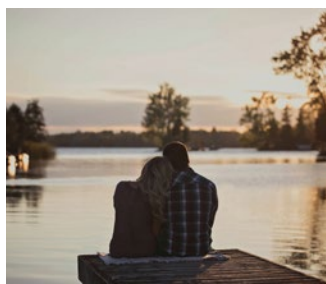
Couples

Marriage is a special covenant ordained of God from creation. This message by Paul Moody looks at the biblical roles of both the husband and the wife.



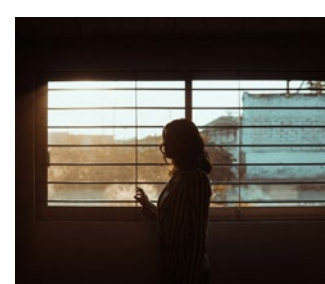
Singles

Is there such a thing as a soul mate? The Bible doesn't directly answer the question for us individually, but there are examples and principles we can apply.



Divorced

God intended marriage to be for life. When it ends in divorce, how can you heal and help your children cope with the devastation of divorce?



Parents

Certain parenting blunders are especially common today. In her article, Becky Sweat shares five big ones to avoid.



Grandparents

Parents aren't always able to stay home with their children. Here is one woman's experience caring for her grandchildren to help fill this role.



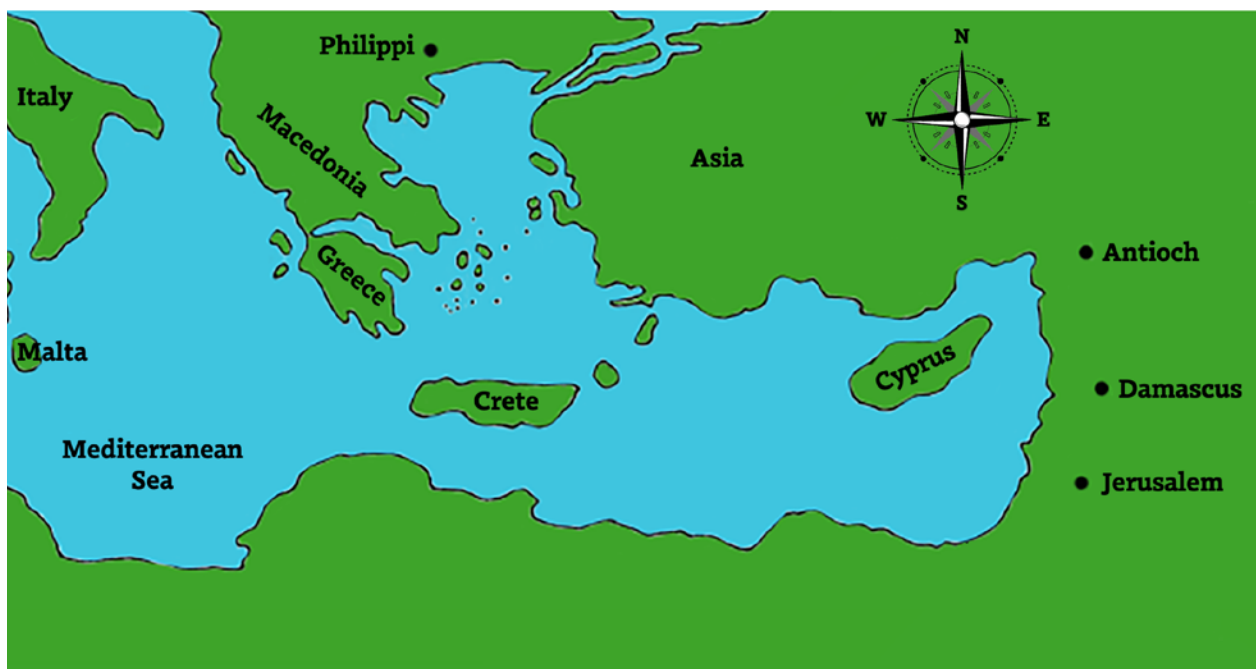
Seniors

A warning message placed along Japan's Pacific coast reveals valuable lessons on the importance of sharing wisdom with the next generation.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Where in the Ancient World is the Apostle Paul?



1. Bam! Paul is struck down blind on the road to _____ (Acts 9:1-9).
2. The disciples are helping Paul escape to the city of _____ after hiding him in a large basket and letting him down through the city wall! (Acts 9:23-26).
3. Here's where Paul began his missionary journeys:

4. Paul is baptizing Lydia the purple cloth seller in the city of _____ (Acts 16:11-15).
5. Oh no! On the way to Italy, Paul gets shipwrecked on the island called _____! (Acts 27:39-44, 26:1).

BEYOND TODAY

May 5-11 | **Is Anger Destroying Your Life?**

Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *Tools for Spiritual Growth*

May 12-18 | **Read the Book**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *How to Understand the Bible*

May 19-25 | **Globalism and Prophecy**

Presented by Gary Petty
Literature offered: *The Horsemen of Revelation*

May 26-
June 1 | **Unmasked: Satan Goes to Church**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Is There Really a Devil?*

June 2-8 | **Unmasked: Religious Pretenders**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The Church Jesus Built*

June 9-15 | **Unmasked: Who Controls the Message?**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The Gospel of the Kingdom*

June 16-22 | **Unmasked: Satan the Identity Thief**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Why Were You Born?*

June 23-29 | **Unmasked: Satan and the Beast of Revelation**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*

June 30-
July 6 | **The Unknown Jesus: Who Is Jesus?**

Presented by Steve Myers
Literature offered: *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*



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Preteen Camp Dates

Camp Florida—May 27-31, 2024

Camp Gilmont—June 2-5, 2024

Camp Colorado—June 23-26, 2024

Camp Ironwood—July 14-17, 2024

Camp Ochoco—July 14-17, 2024

Camp Buckeye—July 28-31, 2024

Camp Seven Mountains—July 28-31, 2024

Teen Camp Dates

Camp Cotubic—June 23-30, 2024

Camp Pinecrest—June 30-July 7, 2024

Southwest Camp—July 7-14, 2024

Camp Woodland—July 19-26, 2024

Northwest Camp—July 21-28, 2024

Winter Camp—TBA

For more information about upcoming summer camps, visit uyc.ucg.org

Join us at Challenger West!

Who—Young adults ages 18-32

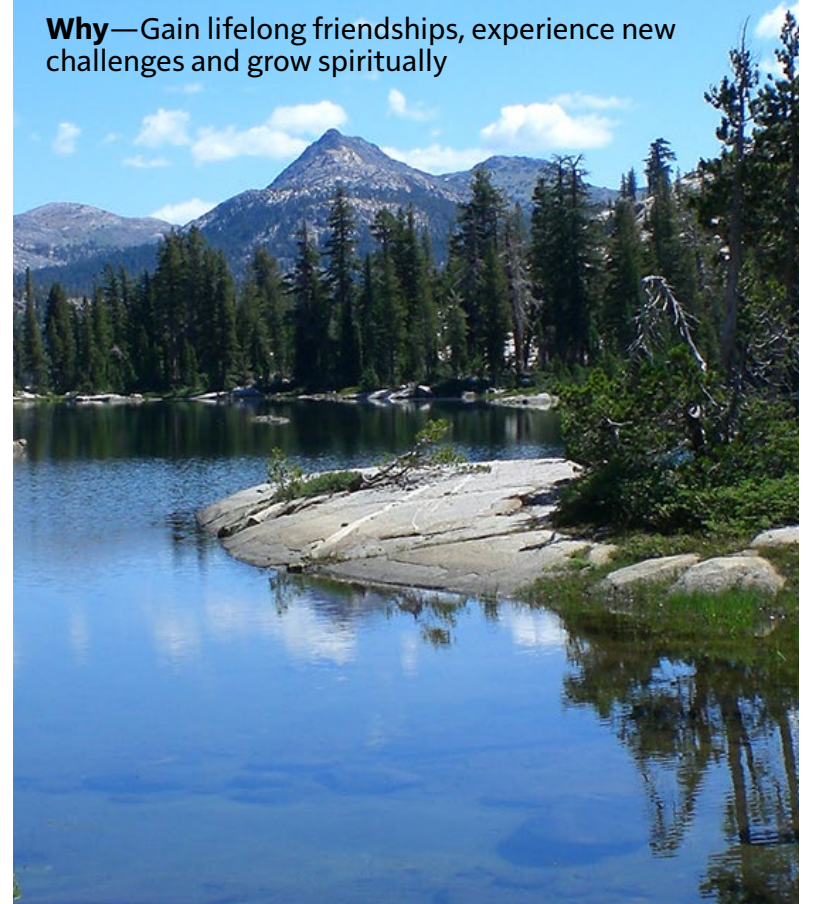
What—An immersive backpacking experience

When—July 31-Aug. 6, 2024

Where—Emigrant Wilderness (just north of Yosemite)

How—Apply at ucg.regfox.com/challenger-sierra

Why—Gain lifelong friendships, experience new challenges and grow spiritually



BY THE NUMBERS

1,797

New subscribers to the *Beyond Today*
Youtube channel as of April 22.