



United Church of God  
P.O. Box 541027,  
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027  
(513) 576-9796

# United News™

News of the United Church of God, an International Association

Vol. 9, No 10

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December 2003

## News At a Glance

### New Good News Promotions Begin

Several exciting new *Good News* promotions are underway. During the next two months we will spend a large part of our Internet advertising budget



New promotional card will appear in 140,000 copies of the January 2004 issue of *Countryside* magazine

and will add around 21,000 new subscribers to our flagship publication.

The Media and Communications Services department also had a little extra budget to put towards additional advertising to help increase *GN* circulation. These extra funds are due to lower than budgeted *Good News* print runs.

During December and January we will market *The Good News* to over 3,500,000 households using various card packs. Besides that, Scott Ashley, *GN* managing editor, and Shaun Venish, art director, recently designed a new bind-in subscription insert to be used in the January 2004 issue of *Countryside* magazine. This postage-paid insert will be placed in 140,000 copies of this publication, which generally reaches people living in rural areas.

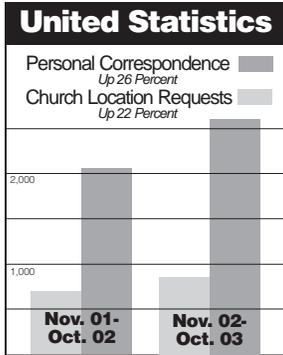
John LaBissoniere/Peter Eddington

### United Youth Camp 2004 Dates Set

The following dates were announced for the United Youth Camps in 2004:

- Camp Pinecrest, Fredericktown,

See "News at a Glance," page 2



## Alaska Feast Site Accepting Applications

by Charles Melear

The United Church of God will sponsor a one-time Festival site in Anchorage, Alaska, in 2004.

The 500 to 600 anticipated attendees will be hosted by the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel, just 15 minutes from Anchorage International Airport. Its downtown location provides easy access to Anchorage's busiest shopping centers, finest restaurants and family-friendly cultural activities.

The 16-story hotel features 375 guest rooms with museum-quality

sculpture and artwork. The hotel claims an international reputation for dining excellence and friendly service. The impressive atrium lobby features a jade staircase and a Native Alaskan design motif.

### Accommodations/Amenities

Standard rooms: All rooms feature new Sheraton Sweet Sleeper beds, high-speed Internet, 24-hour access to the health club, complimentary weekday newspapers, hair dryer, free cable, remote-control TV, coffee makers, iron and board, voice mail and alarm radio.

Club level rooms include additional amenities such as large work desk with return, ergonomic chair, laptop power supply, free bottled water, terry cloth robe and private access to the Club Level Lounge featuring free weekday continental breakfast and evening hors d'oeuvres.

Deluxe club level rooms include all the amenities above plus an in-room printer/copier/fax machine and mini-refrigerator.

The rate is \$79 per night for standard

See "Alaska," page 5



Sheraton Anchorage Hotel lobby; right, the moon over Anchorage

## Feast Draws Positive Reports



The choir sings praises to God in Steamboat Springs, Colorado; a happy Feastgoer in Zambia (photos by Scott Ashley and André van Belkum). For more photos of the Feast around the world, see pages 4 and 5

Each year the Feast of Tabernacles makes a big impact on many of the communities where it is held, sometimes including press coverage. The new site in Kerrville, Texas, attracted the attention of the *Kerrville Daily Times*, which ran a positive article Oct. 10, as well as a follow-up photo feature.

The article, titled "Looking Forward to Christ's

Return," was written by Gerard MacCrossan, who interviewed Festival coordinator Britton Taylor and Gary Petty, who pastors in the Kerrville area. He also attended five services. The article began:

"Eight days of worship and praise to God commence

See "Feast," page 5

## Lafayette Sponsors Eight Good News Seminars

by Victor Kubik

In November and early December, the Lafayette, Indiana, congregation sponsored eight *Good News* Seminars for members and *GN* readers in the local area. The idea came up because the congregation wanted to reach out towards those who are familiar with *The Good News* magazine and to do its part in the preaching of the gospel.

The thought behind *Good News* Seminars was that people who receive the magazine and have become familiar with the content and authors might be interested in meeting the authors and hearing them speak. In our promotional brochure we stated "You've read the *Good News*. Now, meet the writers!"

We were pleased with the willing and enthusiastic support from Scott Ashley,

managing editor of *The Good News*, and contributors Gary Petty, Melvin Rhodes, Mario Seiglie and Bob Fahey who were glad to come and give presentations.

We designed our own four-fold brochure that we printed ourselves and mailed out to over 1,000 *Good News* readers in the Lafayette church area. In addition we sent out over 100 brochures to people we've had contact with in the past who we thought might be interested in coming. Also, members took brochures home to give to friends. Member Tony Pacelli placed a number of the brochures in a local Christian bookstore as well as on the counter at his chiropractic practice.

Days before the seminars began, we mailed out a reminder

postcard. Michael Kubik established a Web site called [gnseminars.org](http://gnseminars.org) that had

See "Seminars," page 2



Unfolded brochure advertising the eight *Good News* Seminars sponsored by the Lafayette, Indiana, congregation. More than 1,000 brochures were distributed

## First-Contact Literature to Be Tested on 50 Campuses

About a year and a half ago, an interesting idea was generated by Donald Ward and several other members of the Council of Elders. Why not produce and test-market mini-booklets to college-age young people and other interested readers? Why not develop a few booklets that could be read in 10 minutes or less?

Why not consider developing supplemental shorter literature that contained as few as 700 to 1,500 words?

The idea was to produce something similar to an advertising brochure, yet with more content. This "first-contact" literature would encapsulate a single aspect of the gospel message, attempting to capture the reader's attention to encourage him or her to want to learn more.

During the May 2002 General Conference of Elders meeting in Cincinnati, Victor Kubik, chairman of the Media Committee, asked Randy Stiver, pastor



Mock-up of new first-contact booklet to be tested at colleges

See "First," page 2

### Inside:

- 3 News From Around the World
- 6 From the Word
- 11 Treasure Digest
- 12 Local Church Updates
- 14 Announcements
- 16 What's New on the Web?

## News At a Glance

### Continued from page 1

Missouri, June 10 to 17. (June 9 is staff training day.) Director: Greg Sargent. Web site: [www.cgca.net/pinecrest](http://www.cgca.net/pinecrest).

- Camp Hye Sierra, California, June 27 to July 4. Director: James Capo. Web site: [www.cgca.net/HyeSierra](http://www.cgca.net/HyeSierra).

- Camp Woodmen, Blountsville, Alabama, July 4 to 11. Director: Mark Winner. Mr. Winner "will be the director for one year to give Mr. [David] Dobson a break," said Larry Greider, United Youth Camps coordinator.

- Teton Challenger Camp, Wyoming, July 12 to 22 (staff arrive July 11). Director: Paul Luecke. Web site: [www.cgca.net/teconcamp](http://www.cgca.net/teconcamp).

- Camp Carter, Fort Worth, Texas, July 18 to 25. Director: Ken Treby. Web site: [trebybig.org/CampCarter/](http://trebybig.org/CampCarter/).

- Camp Davidson, Sisters, Oregon, Aug. 8 to 15 (through 19 for the wilderness program). Director: Matthew Fenchel.

- Camp Heritage, Farmington, Pennsylvania, Aug. 15 to 22. Director: Darris McNeely.

- Winter Camp, Williams Bay, Wisconsin, 2004 dates not yet confirmed. Director: Steve Nutzman.

## 50 Campuses Where First- Contact Literature Will Be Tested

Below is the list of campuses in six states that will distribute the first-contact literature (see "First-Contact Literature to Be Tested on 50 Campuses," starting on page 1).

**Illinois**  
Eastern Illinois University  
Illinois State University  
Joliet Junior College  
Northwestern University  
Oakton Community College  
Southern Illinois University  
University of Illinois

**Indiana**  
Ball State University  
Indiana State University  
Indiana University (Bloomington)  
Indiana University (South Bend)  
Indiana-Purdue University (Ft. Wayne)  
Indiana-Purdue University (Indianapolis)  
Purdue University (West Lafayette)  
University of Notre Dame  
University of Southern Indiana

**Kentucky**  
Eastern Kentucky University  
Jefferson Community College  
Morehead State University  
Murray State University  
Northern Kentucky University  
Paducah Community College  
University of Kentucky  
University of Louisville  
Western Kentucky University  
**Missouri**  
Central Missouri State University

See "News at a Glance," page 16

### "First," continued from page 1

of the Eugene, Roseburg and Coos Bay, Oregon, congregations, to conduct a focus group with high school and college-age young adults. Over 60 young adults and another 15 ministers and other adults attended the nearly 1½-hour brainstorming session. The purpose of the meeting was to give the first-contact project some creative impetus.

Two weeks later, Mr. Stiver and his wife, Linda, conducted a second meeting composed of the UCG Oregon young adults group. They also saw the need to reach the younger public with effective first-contact literature.

With the combined efforts of Mr.

Kubik, Mr. Stiver, Peter Eddington (Media and Communications Services operation manager), Scott Ashley (*Good News* managing editor), Tom Robinson (*Good News* writer) and Shaun Venish (*Good News* art director), the idea came to life. Over a period of months, they discussed various ideas about approach, subjects and content.

Finally, at the Council meetings in August 2003, Mr. Eddington presented mock-ups of three 3¼- by 8¼-inch first-contact brochures: *Sex Outside of Marriage: What's the Big Deal?*, *The Debt Trap: How Do I Get Free?* and *Was Christ Born on Christmas?* The Oregon young adults were again called to assist in September, serving as a focus group

to review the first-contact samples.

With the Council giving its approval of the literature and the designs, the next step was to find a means to effectively market the new brochures to the often difficult-to-reach college-age young adults. After researching several distribution companies, we located New Age Marketing, Inc. This marketing group maintains a distribution operation on hundreds of U.S. university and college campuses. Through their operation, company personnel place commercial literature, brochures and posters on company-owned display racks and on campus-provided bulletin boards using clear pin-up plastic holders.

Beginning in January 2004, 50,000

pieces of our first-contact literature will be tested on 50 university and college campuses in six states (see list of campuses in "News at a Glance," left). There will be 25,000 copies each of *Sex Outside of Marriage* and *The Debt Trap* made available. Each brochure will include a business-reply response card, so interested readers will be able to subscribe to both *The Good News* and *Vertical Thought* magazines by simply dropping the card in the mail.

Please pray for God's blessings on this important test. As Mr. Stiver commented, this is an opportunity to "energize the gospel of God's Kingdom to the younger generation of the 21st century."

John LaBissoniere

### "Seminars," continued from page 1

a registration form along with all the information about the speakers and their topics.

Member Cherie Zahora helped coordinate music for each of the presentations. This caused everyone to work hard for a deadline and goal and brought out great satisfaction in the quality of music produced.

We had twice sent out tape offers to *Good News* readers and received a healthy response of nearly 15 percent asking for tapes. We also have five people who have completed the *Bible Study Course* and have said they want further contact, but who have yet to come to services. Our purpose in these seminars was to motivate people to come and meet us in person.

The seminars began with Gary Petty, who is the voice of *Good News* radio heard over part of the Lafayette church area, speaking about "Three Keys to a Happy Marriage." Then Bob Fahey gave two presentations about what God is doing on this earth and about Christ's return and the Kingdom of God.

Then Scott Ashley spoke about the spread of Islam and the Middle East in prophecy. Melvin Rhodes gave two PowerPoint presentations titled "America and the Bible" and "The Book That Changed the World." Finally, on Dec. 6 Mario Seiglie is scheduled to speak about "The Proofs of the Bible," showing

how archaeological evidence supports the veracity of the Bible.

With each seminar we made a hand-out with the main points of the presentation along with a photo of the presenter. It also included contact information of the pastor. We wanted to personalize our presence as much as possible.



### What Did We Learn?

By examining the mailing list, it was informative to see the extent of *Good News* subscribers. We

found that there were sections of the church area that were growing faster than others in numbers of *Good News* subscribers. Perhaps we now need to go to these areas for a more localized presentation such as a Bible study or another seminar.

For example, we learned that the

majority of subscribers are not in Lafayette, but in the Kokomo, Indiana, area. Since most people are not willing to drive the hour between the two cities, we thought it might be prudent to hold smaller seminars in known locations such as hotel conference rooms in the future. We know that sending out one mailing to interest people is not enough. We hope to reach the *Good News* readers with more mailings and refer them to our expanding Web site. As they

large, only about five, but hosting the seminars did have an energizing effect on our congregation. It stimulated interest and commitment in our newer members and attendees.

We've had people call and express an interest in the lectures who said that they would have come if they didn't have something else planned that day. We've directed them to our Web site to listen to the seminars and download the hand-outs. We are also considering mailing a follow-up letter to those who have requested tapes in the past to make them aware that they can hear the messages on the Web site, and to ask for their suggestions for *Good News* Seminars 2004.

We are now considering doing something similar in our sister congregation in Terre Haute, Indiana, which we just learned has over 1,100 *Good News* subscribers, with almost 200 of them in the Terre Haute city limits!



It will take repeated efforts to acquaint and connect *Good News* readers with a local presence. We pray for God's direction for increased success. UN

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**United News**  
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Editor: Peter W. Eddington Managing editor: Mike Bennett Copy editor: Becky Bennett UCG/IA Council of Elders: Aaron Dean, Robert Dick, Jim Franks, Doug Horchak, Clyde Kilough

**Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to United News, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027**

#### International addresses:

AFRICA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.  
E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia.  
Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BAHAMAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8673, Nassau, Bahamas. Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

BRITISH ISLES: United Church of God—British Isles, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England.  
Phone: 020-8386-9467 Fax: 01257-453978

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station

D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9666, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: [info@ucg.ca](mailto:info@ucg.ca)

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Lualaba Beach Estate, Suva, Fiji

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amielot, 75011 Paris, France.  
GERMANY: Vereinigte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 E-mail: [info@gutenachrichten.org](mailto:info@gutenachrichten.org)

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy. Mobile phone: 338-4037919 Fax (+39) 035-452 16 26 E-mail: [redazione@labuonanotizia.org](mailto:redazione@labuonanotizia.org)

MALAWI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. E-mail: [malawi@ucg.org](mailto:malawi@ucg.org)

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius. E-mail: [mauritiuss@ucg.org](mailto:mauritiuss@ucg.org)

(chairman), Victor Kubik, Les McCullough, Joel Meeker, Mario Seiglie, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker, Anthony Wasilkoff

President: Roy Holladay

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NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 241-0150 Cell/Text: (+63) 0918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Forenade Kyrka, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England.

SOUTH AFRICA: United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694. E-mail: [rsa@ucg.org](mailto:rsa@ucg.org)

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: 0151-576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127,

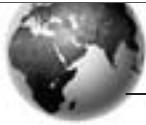
Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. E-mail: [zambia@ucg.org](mailto:zambia@ucg.org)

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe. Phone: 011716273 E-mail: [zimbabwe@ucg.org](mailto:zimbabwe@ucg.org)

#### Internet access on your computer:

The United Church of God, an International Association, has a home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. The address <http://www.ucg.org> gives you access to general information and news about the Church, issues of *The Good News* and *United News*, as well as our booklets. The address <http://www.ucg.ca> accesses the Church's Canadian Web site, <http://www.labuonanotizia.org> the Italian Web site, <http://www.goodnews.org.uk> the British Isles Web site, <http://www.ucg.org.ph> the Philippines Web site and <http://www.ucgrsa.org> the Southern Africa Web site.



## News From **Around the World**

### German Bible Study Course Completed

by **Jesmima Allaoua**

The first week of October UCG-Germany finished the last chapter on a nearly three year project. The final lesson of the German Bible Study Course was printed in time to be handed out to brethren attending the German-language Feast site in Schluchsee, Germany.

Five different people worked on translating the 12-lesson course, with the German regional pastor, Paul

four new booklets and six updated booklets were printed or reprinted during the time the course was being produced.

Brethren made up a team of 12 proofreaders who checked each lesson for good German style and spelling. In some cases differences of opinions among team members were settled by consulting the authoritative Duden language advisory service. This service is available on a paid call-by-call basis and is much cheaper than using a professional freelance proofreader.

Since translated German text is longer than the English original, some copy fitting was necessary. In several cases additional space was gained by omitting photos deemed culturally inappropriate for a German-language audience. For example, all of the images of Bible personalities in lesson 2 were dropped.

In addition, lessons 1 and 2 of the English course were combined into one lesson. Lesson 1 was then completely rewritten to be similar in style and content to the old "Correspondence Course" lesson 1 of years ago in order to be more relevant to non-Bible reading Europeans.

The new course will be offered for the first time in early January with a direct mailing to *Gute Nachrichten* readers who have renewed their subscriptions. To save postage, four lessons will be mailed at a time. Stu-



dents will be required to return a response card to receive the next four lessons. Those students willing to take a test after each four lesson set will be awarded a certificate of completion at the end of the course. However, taking the tests will not be a requirement for continuing the course.

The German Bible Study Course will be a valuable tool in preaching the gospel in the German-language region of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, UCG-Germany's area of responsibility. The valuable experience gained in producing the course will serve UCG-Holland well, since UCG-Germany will provide typesetting for the Dutch Bible Study Course. The first two lessons have already been translated into Dutch! **UN**



Kieffer, having translated or rewritten six of them by himself. The additional workload for the German-language region was considerable in view of UCG-Germany's ongoing publishing efforts in producing the bimonthly *Gute Nachrichten* magazine and a monthly *United News* in German called *Intern*. In addition,

### Canadian Media Team Holds Annual Meeting

On Sunday, Nov. 9, the Canadian office held its annual Media Team meeting at its home office in Etobicoke, Ontario. U.S. Media and Communications Services operation manager, Peter Eddington, and his wife, Terri, were able to attend the meetings this year. The all-day event was very profitable as the Canadian office planned its media efforts for the coming fiscal year. The Canadian National Council will have a December 2003 meeting, at which time the recommendations of the Media Team will be brought forward.

Peter Eddington and David Palmer (coordinator of the Canadian Media Team), gave split sermons on the Sabbath of Nov. 8 for the Toronto congregation. The congregation has grown over the past few years so that an overflow room with audio and video feeds is now needed.

Also in attendance at the media meetings were Anthony and Linda Wasilkoff, Ed van Pelt, Graemme and Lynn Mar-



God's people and efforts around the world.

Peter Eddington



Top: Canadian Media Team: Anthony Wasilkoff, Lynn and Graemme Marshall, David Palmer, Linda Wasilkoff, Ed van Pelt, George Carter and guest Terri Eddington; above, Mr. Carter and Peter Eddington (photos by Peter and Terri Eddington)

shall, George Carter and Kevin Ford. Mrs. Wasilkoff provided food for the team throughout the activities.

The Canadian media plan proposes a national ad campaign in either *Alive* magazine or *Reader's Digest*, along with a more aggressive Internet advertising option, plus increased member involvement in some direct mail programs. Continued prayers for the success of the work of God in Canada is much appreciated, as they are for all of

### International News At a Glance

#### British Isles Advertises GN in Selections; Offers UN to BSC Grads

The United Church of God in the British Isles has received 2,000 U.K. responses from a *Selections* advertising booklet, which is a branch of The Information Service in which we have advertised in the past. Because of the limited size of the ad, these people may not have a clear idea of what *The Good News* is like, so we are not putting them on file as subscribers until they have seen two or three issues and verified that they would like to continue. We are sending our special introductory issue along with a current or recent issue to 1,700 of them, and sending three consecutive issues to the other 300. This will serve as a test to determine the best way to handle such responses in the future.

At the beginning of October a letter was mailed to some 700 people who have received all 12 issues of the *Bible Study Course* (whether or not they have returned the test answer cards that are provided to students from the British Isles) offering them a subscription to *United News* and the booklet *This Is the United Church of God*. This will give them an opportunity to become more familiar with the Church. So far 133 have asked for *United News*, and most also requested the booklet.

#### British Isles Reports on Circulation

The report for October 2003 shows that the total circulation of *The Good News* handled in the British Isles had increased to 2,875 (from 2,751 the previous month).

Of the total circulation figure, 2,134 are in the United Kingdom, 75 in the Isle of Man, 107 in Sweden and 50 in the Republic of Ireland. The remainder are distributed within a further 34 European countries and Israel.

During October we received a total of 761 letters and other responses, including 281 requests for 558 items of other literature and 30 new requests for the *Bible Study Course*.

Total enrollment for the *Bible Study Course* currently stands at 406 (with another 733 already having completed all 12 lessons and 100 of these have returned all 12 test cards); *United News* subscriptions stand at 356 and *World News & Prophecy* also at 356.

There are 132 donors, 89 coworkers, 143 members and 43 prospective members and associates on file.

Jan Schroeder

#### Isle of Man Hosts Second Public Bible Study

A total of eight people attended the second Bible study for *Good News* readers on the Isle of Man on Sunday, Nov. 9. Of those who attended, three were *Good News* readers, with the rest being members of the Church. David Fenney presented a study on the subject of "The Meaning of Christianity."

After the Sabbath service the previous day, the congregation considered options for further meetings. One suggestion made was to write to those readers who have attended the two studies, and also those who expressed an interest in them but were unable to make the meetings, and invite them to the regular Sabbath service in the normal meeting hall in Ramsey on particular Sabbaths when messages appropriate for visitors could be presented.

This report is from the Nov. 15 UCG-British Isles National Announcements.

#### Canadian Office Alive With Activity

The major media emphasis for the Church in Canada this year has been the ad in *Alive* magazine. We have received a total of 896 responses to date. The responses to the first ad were greater than the second ad, and only two people responded twice.

Also of interest is that in the past several weeks we've had reply cards from three different *Reader's Digest* ads that were placed four, five and six ads ago. It shows how these magazines have "staying power." A large number of people tend to save them.

The Canadian office staff also had the opportunity to attend the "Church and the Law" seminar once again. It's an annual event and was held this year on Nov. 12. About 500 people were in attendance from various churches and charities to hear a number of speakers give updates on legal matters and government legislation that has been passed and is pending. It was, as it was last year, very interesting and worthwhile.

The November issues of *United News* and *World News & Prophecy* arrived at the office and will be mailed with the November-December issue of *United News Canada*. The postage savings will be in the area of \$500 by combining these publications. It will also save time for the office staff.

The Canadian office staff members have been busy over the past few weeks as they prepare the Operations Plan for 2004-2005 and, in conjunction with the Ethics/Finance Committee of the National Council, the budget for 2004-2005. These will be presented to the Canadian National Council in December.

Ed van Pelt

# Feast 2003

## Another Look



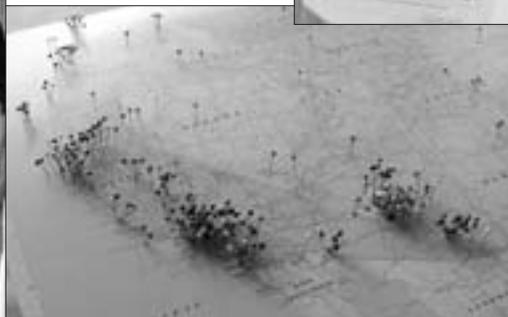
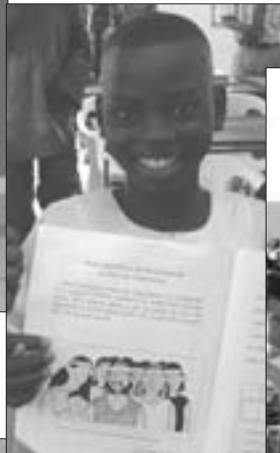
New Zealand, clockwise from top: Doug Johnson speaking; snowboarders; sharing artwork; sharing fellowship



Zambia, clockwise from top: Members at Nalubanda; Bridget Mafohla being baptized in a cattle trough; fixing a bicycle flat tire



Clockwise from lower left: Feast scenes from Esquipulas, Guatemala; Argentina; Chile; Togo; and a map showing where attendees at Escondido, California, were from



Right, from bottom: choir sings in Horseshoe Valley, Ontario; dinner cruise in Hawaii; and fellowship at Hagerstown, Maryland





The Feast is for young people too! Children's choir and Festival Youth Instruction in Steamboat Springs, Colorado (photos by Scott Ashley)



**"Feast," continued from page 1**

in Kerrville tonight when more than 1,000 members of the United Church of God, an International Association, begin their celebration of the biblical holy day, Feast of Tabernacles.

"The annual festival is marked at 15 feast sites across North America and internationally in nearly two dozen other countries, in addition to dozens of other feast sites hosted by churches sharing similar doctrines to the United Church of God."

After discussing the choice of Kerrville and the popularity of the site (300 applicants had to be turned away), the article continued:

"We will have a two-hour (morning) service every day during the festival," Taylor said. The only exception to this is the opening service at 7:30 p.m. marking the beginning of the Sabbath at sundown, the start of the eight days of tabernacles, and the last day—next Saturday—which will conclude the festival with two services.

"Although the feasts observed by members of UCG primarily date back to the Old Testament, the church is Christian, accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah and it observes the same customs he did, said Gary Petty, pastor of UCG's 190-strong San Antonio congregation. Petty also travels regularly to Kerrville to visit and lead Bible study groups for the church's small Kerrville membership.

"[Tabernacles] is one of the festivals that was given to ancient Israel," Petty said Thursday. "We see it as having New Testament significance," Taylor concurred.

"We keep the feasts established in the Old Testament," Taylor said. "We see a future fulfillment of these festivals."

The article included a description of the meaning of the Day of Atonement as well as the Feast of Tabernacles:

"In the calendar of holy days, the Feast of Tabernacles falls five days after the Day of Atonement, known to Jews as Yom Kippur. On Atonement, UCG members fast as a sacrifice, asking God to eradicate Satan and the sin-

fulness in the earth that must be removed before eternal peace is established by Christ on the Last Great Day at the end of Tabernacles.

"Petty said the Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the return of Christ to the earth to rid the world of the sin found here.

"That's what we're living for," said Petty, who will address the congregation at tonight's opening service. "That's what should motivate us."

The article mentioned various activities members would participate in during the Feast and continued:

"Taylor said Feast of Tabernacle's services will not be restricted to church members. However, because of the size of the registered assembly, in addition to the others expected to attend, Taylor said locals wishing to attend may find themselves restricted to standing room only."

After a subhead, "About the United Church of God," the article concluded:

"United Church of God found its roots in the religious movement founded more than 50 years ago by the late Herbert W. Armstrong. As a radio evangelist, Armstrong's Bible-centered religious teaching led to the formation of the Radio Church of God, later known as the Worldwide Church of God.

"Following Armstrong's death in 1986, doctrinal shifts, notably the rejection of the church's traditional Sabbatarian religious practices, led to many members leaving the Worldwide church. UCG is among the largest of the churches organized and recognized by former Worldwide members across the globe to continue worshipping God based on Armstrong's teachings. United Church of God's Council of Elders is composed of a dozen ordained ministers, all of whom formerly pastored in the Worldwide church. On the Web: www.ucg.org."

Other sites also received press coverage, including Hawaii, where the Church's donations to a local charity were covered, and Bend, Oregon, where Festival coordinator Larry Walker's article about the Feast appeared on the religion page on the opening day of the Feast. UN

**"Alaska," continued from page 1**

rooms (single/double), \$99 for club level rooms and \$109 for deluxe club level rooms. There is a \$10 charge per extra adult (third and fourth person), but children under 18 are free. The tax is currently 8 percent. Parking is free for those who drive or rent cars.

**Local Attractions**

Anchorage offers the convenience, excitement and ambience of a small but cosmopolitan city nestled between the Chugach Mountains and glaciers at the head of scenic Cook Inlet. Recreational and cultural activities include wildlife viewing and fishing; hiking and biking trails are within minutes of downtown.

Anchorage is a jumping-off point for a myriad of wilderness and outdoor adventures, including some of the

world's most pristine and famous wildlife areas: Denali National Park, Kenai Fjords National Park, Prince William Sound, Katmai National Park, the Alaska Botanical Garden, Alyeska Resort, Big Game Alaska, the Alaska Zoo, Chugach National Forest and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

**First-Come, First-Served Registration/Application**

Due to the Church being directly responsible and liable to the Sheraton Anchorage for the hotel rooms reserved and for providing the meeting space, all accepted attendees must stay at the Sheraton. Exceptions to this will be members living in Alaska or through prior approval.

Acceptance is based on a first-come, first-served basis due to limited space.

There is a \$125 per adult and \$50 per child (age 18 and under) nonre-

fundable application/approval fee. This will be applied to your hotel room bill. This will be returned only under two conditions. 1. If the capacity of the site is reached and no more approvals can be made. 2. If there is a cancellation and another party can fill your hotel space. Unexpected emergencies may result in the loss of monies. The Church suggests taking out travel insurance for protection.

A personal check, traveler's check or money order in U.S. dollars made payable to the United Church of God is the only acceptable form of payment for the application. Note "Alaska" on the memo line of your payment. A credit card number will be required upon notification of approval to hold your hotel room. The Sheraton Web site is at www.sheratonanchoragehotel.com. For further information write to USFestival@ucg.org or call (970)484-5878. UN

**Anchorage, Alaska, Feast 2004 Application**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Total # of adults times \$125 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total # of children age 18 and under times \$50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Application/Approval Fee (nonrefundable to those accepted; will be applied to your hotel bill) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Room Type Request:** Standard King \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Double \_\_\_\_\_  
 Club Level King \_\_\_\_\_ Club Level Double \_\_\_\_\_  
 Deluxe Club Level King \_\_\_\_\_ Deluxe Club Level Double \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with check made out to the United Church of God to:  
 Anchorage Feast 2004, 631 S. Loomis Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80521



## From the Word

# Understanding Alcoholism

■ This is the second in a series on alcoholism from the Focused Education Committee.

by Larry J. Walker and Glen White

Last issue we introduced the topic of alcoholism by showing the need for learning more about this widespread problem. Let us now seek to understand the nature of alcoholism and how it differs from alcohol abuse.

### Alcoholism vs. Alcohol Abuse

Just what is alcoholism? Is it just drinking too much? Or is there more to it than that? *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines alcoholism as "a continued excessive or compulsive use of alcoholic drinks . . . associated with excessive and usually compulsive drinking."

Alcohol abuse refers to the misuse of alcohol resulting in problems to the abuser and those he or she may affect. Abuse does not necessarily indicate alcoholism. Alcoholism involves developing a dependency on alcohol and follows a somewhat predictable progression of symptoms.

Dr. James Royce defines alcoholism as "a chronic illness or disorder characterized by some loss of control over drinking, with habituation or addiction to the drug alcohol, or causing interference in any major life function; for example, health, job, family, friends or the law" (*Alcohol Problems and Alcoholism*, page 10).

He summarizes regarding addiction: "Addiction is a physiological [physical] dependence or need, with its familiar signs of increased tolerance initially, cellular adaptation, and withdrawal symptoms. One physically needs a drink to function."

### Four Phases of Alcoholism

This progression typically proceeds through four stages:

1. *Social Drinking*—Social drinking suggests drinking for stress relief, which results in mood change. It may begin as a result of peer pressure, to go along with the crowd or to alleviate boredom or stress.

2. *Seeking the Mood Change*—This leads to drinking for the purpose of achieving mood change. Drinking habits begin to fall into personal patterns (certain times of the day, in private, etc.) and psychological manifestations. Chief among these is the denial of any dependence in order to protect developing behavioral patterns.

3. *Constantly Seeking the Mood Change*—Phase 3 involves a regular pattern of drinking for the desired effects. This may take the form of regular, ongoing daily drinking or sporadic

episodes of drunkenness followed by periods of abstinence (often labeled as "periodic drinking").

Obsessive and compulsive drinking leads to violations of one's fundamental ethics, values and moral standards. The drinker resorts to entrenched denial defenses to justify this misconduct in response to the objections of family members and other significant persons.

4. *Addiction*—The cells of the body adapt rapidly to the increasing ingestion of alcohol, resulting in a higher level of "tolerance." This means the person is able to consume more beverage alcohol without obvious physical effects or showing signs of impaired behavior. Regardless of the appearance of continued ability to hold a job, keep the family "intact," etc., the increased intake of alcohol causes cellular damage that will eventually exact its toll on the body, even causing organ failure.

Increased tolerance also demands that the person must drink more to achieve the effects sought in stage 1. The nervous system adapts to the escalating level of alcohol, resulting in physical dependence. Drinking beyond tolerance levels results in drunkenness. Suddenly abstaining or drinking less than the tolerance level throws the cells of the body into acute distress, which produces varying withdrawal symptoms including "delirium tremens" (commonly referred to as "DTs"). The syndrome of physical dependence or addiction is now in full swing.

The growing need for alcohol becomes the focus of the victim's life. The alcoholic's world begins to function around the chemical. It becomes companion, conversational item, basis of jokes and determines choice of com-

*Alcoholism is a physical condition compounded by developed, entrenched psychological patterns that protect the addiction. However, much of the behavior associated with alcoholism, including becoming intoxicated, is sin; and all sin must be repented of. No unrepentant sinner will be allowed entry into the Kingdom of God. A repentant sinner will abhor his sin and make every effort, with God's help, to stop sinning.*

panions. The half case of beer or the several half gallons of "cooking wine" becomes first on the list of grocery items into the basket. The liquor store becomes very important when the Friday afternoon errands are done prior to the beginning of God's Sabbath. A picnic just wouldn't be a picnic without the cooler full of a favorite alcoholic beverage.

Many people who are not alcoholics go through these same motions but not on a consistent basis. They can enjoy an alcohol-free gathering. The dependent person will make sure he or she has a few before attending such an occasion or will find ways to leave early or steer the group to a "watering hole."

As time goes by, the sufferer develops whatever means necessary to maintain his supply of alcohol, including lying, hiding bottles, sneaking drinks, even stealing. Family life, job performance and health all suffer from the progression. The alcoholic family member becomes a habitual source of uncertainty, causing embarrassment and shame, often missing scheduled appointments, always promising never to do it again. Frustrated family members often lash out in anger or make threats or impassioned pleas for abstinence. This drives the alcoholic deeper into the delusional world of denial, shame and self-pity.

Psychologically isolated, the alcoholic addictively reaches for what he or she considers as friend and source of stabilization—alcohol. This convoluted progression continues to spiral downward and out of control, leaving emotional trauma and estrangement of relationships in its path.

What we have just described is also called chemical dependency. Dr. James Milam, author of *Under the Influence*, describes this phenomenon as "a progressive, ongoing chronic illness characterized by increased tolerance which results in loss of control over the chemical, resulting in continued use in spite of negative consequences."

### Disease or Moral Weakness?

This brings up a controversial point. Many believe alcoholics simply lack willpower to stop drinking. Yet the medical profession almost unanimously considers alcoholism an illness or disease. Is it a sickness or is it a sin?

Those who are able to drink in mod-

eration may wonder why others seem unable to stop drinking, despite the negative consequences. Some conclude that this person is simply weak-willed or lacking in character.

However, researchers have noted that a genetic predisposition to alcohol addiction afflicts a minority of the population (about 10 to 15 percent of Anglo-Americans). In other words, some people carry a genetic predisposition to addiction, which is triggered by alcohol. In some cases this addiction blossoms with the first drink.

Because this phenomenon has a documented pathology, alcoholism has been classified as an "illness." The American Medical Society, considering that alcoholism fits that description,



declared it so in 1956.

Classifying alcoholism as an illness does not convey permission for continuing inappropriate and destructive drinking behavior. The disease concept of alcoholism offers an explanation, not an excuse. It simply defines the problem in order to determine proper treatment. Treatment methods emphasize: number one, the primary need to stop ingestion of the chemical; and number two, the need to accept responsibility for the consequences of one's behavior. For an alcoholic, already carrying a heavy load of guilt, the concept of personal responsibility is much less difficult to bear than more guilt and shame.

Medical classification of alcoholism as a primary disease has opened insurance coverage for many victims who might otherwise not be able to afford the clinical treatment that is so effective in helping to restore thousands to healthy productivity.

### The Biblical Teaching About Alcohol Abuse

The Bible clearly labels drunkenness as one of the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21), and warns that no "drunkard" will inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).

However, the context of Galatians 5 is noteworthy. In verse 13 Paul admonishes the Galatians not to "use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh."

The word in Galatians 5:13 translated "opportunity" ("occasion," KJV) is significant. Wuest explains:

"It is a military term speaking of a base of operations. In our Galatian passage it means 'the cause, occasion, or pretext' of a thing. Paul exhorts the

Galatians not to make their liberty . . . a base of operations from which to serve sin. Their liberty was not to be used as a spring-board from which to take off with the intention of sinning (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Volume 1, page 150).

So Paul is simply disarming the argument that one may continue unrepentant sinful behavior (including drunkenness), using a false concept of "liberty" as a "spring-board."

To consider these passages as a condemnation of someone struggling with a physiologically-based chemical addiction would be most unfortunate, as well as counterproductive to the victim, who desperately needs love and support in his or her struggle for sobriety.

Alcoholism is a physical condition compounded by developed, entrenched psychological patterns that protect the addiction.

However, much of the behavior associated with alcoholism, including becoming intoxicated, is sin; and all sin must be repented of. No unrepentant sinner will be allowed entry into the Kingdom of God. A repentant sinner will abhor his sin and make every effort, with God's help, to stop sinning. For an alcoholic, this means abstinence and seeking established and proven treatment methods to gain sobriety. More about that in the next article in this series. **UN**

*This article was first published in the July 13, 1998, issue of United News. The Alcohol and Substance Abuse Committee is composed of Dennis Luker (committee head), Merna Leisure, Richard Pinelli, Larry Walker and Glen White.*

# On the Mountain With God

■ What can we do to regain some of the inspiration and excitement we felt at the Feast of Tabernacles?

by Don Hooser

When we come back “into the world” from our Feast of Tabernacles trip, we can find ourselves in the valley of a post-Feast letdown. Let’s see how we can cling to the inspiration we received and stay on the mountain with God.

## Mountaineering With Moses

Moses died in faith and will be in the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:13, 23-29, 35). But because of Moses’ mistake and sin at Kadesh, God told Moses that he would die before the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River. God would not allow him to lead the Israelites over into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:7-12; Deuteronomy 31:2).

But God in His mercy offered Moses this blessing: “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab,

“Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land [much of Canaan]” (Deuteronomy 34:1).

Moses must have been very grateful and inspired to at least and at last see the land that they had longed to see and inherit for 40 years. His last moments before he died were filled with the joy of seeing the Promised Land stretching far and wide before him. He had long had a vision in his mind’s eye, and now he could literally see it for himself.

In the Bible, “mountain” often represents government, and a powerful government compared to “hills” of lesser governments. But going up a mountain sometimes represents approaching God, seeking a closer relationship with Him. Just as one sees more when on top of a mountain, one sees more spiritually when close to God.

## An Uplifting Experience

Each year, God’s people go up on a mountain to receive a vision of God’s plan for mankind, a vision of our ultimate destiny, a vision of the wonderful world of tomorrow, a vision of the spiritual Promised Land!

We experience small mountains with each Holy Day, and we experience the larger mountain when we go to observe the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. It should be the most uplifting experience of the year. We experience a spiritual high with God’s Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and become spiritually recharged for the coming year.

Jerusalem was on a small mountain, and that is why traveling to Jerusalem was spoken of as going “up to Jerusalem.” But when they “came up to worship at the feast,” there was a dual meaning (John 12:20). Anytime we worship or draw closer to God, we are being elevated. During the Millennium, whether

or not Jerusalem is at a higher elevation than surrounding areas, all people “shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and



*Each year, God’s people go up on a mountain to receive a vision of God’s plan for mankind, a vision of our ultimate destiny, a vision of the wonderful world of tomorrow, a vision of the spiritual Promised Land!*

to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).

## A Vision of the Kingdom

When Jesus was going to be transfigured, He took Peter, James and John up on a high mountain. There they received a vision of Jesus in His glorified state along with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-9).

We as God’s people go up to His feasts to receive “visions” of life after Christ’s second coming.

## Reflecting the Light

After Moses had been with God on Mt. Sinai for 40 days, his face shown so brightly the people were frightened and he had to put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:29-35). He had in a sense absorbed light from God and was reflecting light from God.

We need to take advantage of every opportunity to absorb light from God and to reflect His light. When we return from God’s Feast, our faces should be glowing with smiles of joy. More importantly, our hearts should be glowing with joy and renewed dedication to God and His great work.

For us to be lights, we must continually go to the source of light. May this become our habit or “instinct,” like some bugs instinctively are attracted to light. Jesus said, “He who does the truth comes to the light” (John 3:21). “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you,” James wrote (James 4:8). We must continually and zealously come to the light and draw near to God.

## Solidly in “Mount Zion”

In the Bible, “Mount Zion” often refers to God’s Church. “For you have not come to the mountain that may be

touched and that burned with fire . . . but you have come to Mount Zion . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:18-23). One important way to stay close to God is to be solidly in “Mount Zion”—in God’s Church.

This includes obediently going up to His assemblies—to His holy convocations when He commands us to come and worship Him (Hebrews 10:23-25). “O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain,” Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 40:9). We have more than one mountain each year. We are invited to come up on the mountain with God every Sabbath and every Holy Day.

And we can and must climb the “mountain of God’s holiness” daily (Psalm 48:1). Our prayers rise all the way to the third heaven! These weekly and daily ascensions are vital to keeping us inspired, motivated and empowered all year. “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Although we are sad to see the Feast end, God intends that we come back into “the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” so we can “shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). After we have received, we must give. Light is not something that can be selfishly bottled up. It must flow through us and reach out to others through a good example and good works (Matthew 5:14-16). Whereas we tend to feel a letdown after the Feast, focusing on giving and serving brings continued joy. “There is more happiness in giving than in receiving” (Acts 20:35, Today’s English Version).

We are warned not to “neglect so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2:3).

Jesus said, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk [actively put the light of knowledge into practice] while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you” (John 12:35).

## Follow the Flashlight

Someday, end-time events will progress very rapidly. The analogy Jesus was using is like trying to walk through a very dark woods following the one person who has a flashlight. The farther behind the leader you are, the less you see the stumbling blocks. And if we fall very far behind, the flashlight could disappear behind a hill, and we could be helplessly lost. It could be too late to catch up.

We might say that the most important mountain each year is God’s Feast of Tabernacles. God wants us to have zealous determination to keep His Feast, such as is expressed in Isaiah 2:3—“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways.” As much as possible, let’s plan to be there every year forever.

Each year at the Feast we take a good look across the “Jordan River” at the “Promised Land.” We look across into the Millennium with its peace and idyllic conditions for the humans on earth. But more importantly, we look across into the next life—the glorified life in the Kingdom of God. That vision is vital to our endurance and growth.

And after each Feast, may we strive to hold on to the glow—the inspiration and strength we have received—throughout the coming year. We do that largely by going up to the Source of that glow—daily, weekly and yearly. **UN**



*Moses must have been very grateful and inspired to at least and at last see the land that they had longed to see and inherit for 40 years. His last moments before he died were filled with the joy of seeing the Promised Land stretching far and wide before him. He had long had a vision in his mind’s eye, and now he could literally see it for himself.*

across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession” (Deuteronomy 32:49). Later, as God directed,

# Mates Not in the Church: Three True Stories

■ In the May 2003 *United News* a member asked about literature concerning spouses who are not in the Church. Since no literature on the subject was available, three members who were married before coming into the Church decided to tell their very different stories. "We hope that you who have this opportunity can learn and glean something from our past lessons that can be of help to you."

## A Gift From God: My Nonmember Husband

by Gwendoline Sheehan

"The best thing that ever happened to us was the WCG minister visiting our home," said my husband to me. "You, dear, have always been a loving wife, but I now see changes that are beautiful and special. You make me feel like the happiest man in the world."

Two weeks after these words were spoken, I became a widow. My dear Wally died suddenly on Dec. 9, 1978, at 58 years old.

Let me relate now what it was like to live with a spouse who was not a member.

From first hearing God's truth in 1970, to contacting a minister in 1974, my attitudes and actions were changing. It was a time of learning from the Bible, becoming a donor and a coworker. All these new decisions were discussed with my husband, and he thoroughly approved.

At that time there was no mention of a local church in any communications I received. I simply studied and tried to put into practice the contents of the literature I received.

I loved the Bible lessons, and I soon learned the need to change, as each

lesson revealed new truths about what the Bible said.

Especially thought-provoking was the Ten Commandments booklet. Through its contents, I realized it was necessary for me to keep the Sabbath. The articles written in the magazines and booklets stated that the Sabbath was a special time for God—a day to enjoy and make special for your family.

I learned to make sure all housework was finished by Friday and I planned special meals for Saturday, especially breakfast. It was the only day my husband could sleep in. As a police officer, he was up daily at 6:30 a.m.

It was not long before Wally said he liked Saturday the best, since I made it so special for him. However I do remember many foolish and unkind acts on my part towards him. Like thinking on Sabbath that "he" shouldn't be with me to take walks. Or when he gave me, out of love, beautiful cards on Valentine's Day or flowers at Christmas time, I rudely said, "Put them down in the basement!"

I certainly hurt him by acting so self-righteous. In spite of these times, his kindness and love never ceased.

The years soon passed, and we came to September 1974. A serious, painful matter arose—our son and wife separated, with three young boys affected. I fell apart, as grandmas can do, but I found a phone number for the Church.

I made the call and a very gentle, kind man said he was Gary Antion, minister of WCG. He listened to my story, broken by many tears. He agreed that it was a sad case, and gave me comfort and calmed me down.

I told him about my being a coworker for four years but mentioned I had never heard that there was a local church. "What are you going to do now that you know of this?" he said. "Do you not think it is time for a visit from a minister?" I agreed and an appointment was made for that week. The visit was a blessing, and it was arranged for me to start attending services on Sabbath. A young family picked me up, and we all became good friends, including Wally.

The following March 16, 1975, Wally took me to a minister, and I was baptized. Our whole lives changed,

and Wally was pleased for me to take part in all Church activities, and he participated in them, too, including the Feast. He took his holidays so he could attend the first and last services. The brethren made him welcome, and he enjoyed their company.

He told me that he thought it was good that there is a group of people in the world who are trying to learn and live God's way of life. After I became a member, he himself drove me to services, and he often attended as well.

Our lives were now full of new dear friends. We both felt blessed by God.

You may be wondering why my title is "A Gift From God." When the doctor phoned me to give the results of the autopsy regarding Wally's sudden death, the doctor said, "Your husband, Mrs. Sheehan, was a gift from God to you! He should have died at birth. The aneurysm of his brain was a severe birth defect."

It has comforted me since to remember Wally's words, for though I could not see God's Holy Spirit in me working the changes, Wally did!

Yes, Wally was right. The best thing that ever happened to me was that minister's visit. And Wally was a gift from God!

## A Battleground

by JoAnne Read

In Luke 11:17 the Bible clearly tells us that a house divided cannot stand. These words echoed through our home each and every time my husband tried to tell me that Christmas, Easter and all the other man-made holidays were wrong and that Sunday was not the day that we should be keeping holy. These were not God's holidays!

Let me explain. One day at my husband's place of employment he came across a magazine called *The Plain Truth*. From then on our marriage became a battleground. What was this so-called new truth and this magazine that was starting to arrive in our mail box once a month, unsolicited! We were both already active in a church, and we did have the truth, didn't we?

This all darkened and clouded my perception of church. My husband

said that I should study and read! I had studied the Bible and sincerely believed what I had been taught years ago. Was he for real? I began to try and distract my husband from reading the Bible by making unnecessary noise whenever possible. It didn't work; instead it worsened the problem.

I was in the depths of despair and wondered how we were going to continue worshiping and teaching classes, when the particular church we had been attending was supposedly not teaching what was right. Our marriage was in trouble! Did we have to give up all these holidays, including Christmas?

One day after my husband left for work I decided I was going to prove him wrong. As I studied and read from the Bible and from secular history books, I came to the startling realization that what he was telling me and what I studied was true. God had a glorious plan of salvation, not just for me, but for all of mankind. The Bible revealed days that were truly God's Holy Days!

Needless to say we left the church we attended and, to my chagrin, ended up calling a local pastor. We were invited and welcomed to attend Sabbath services.

Pat and I have been attending the Church of God since 1988. I resisted conversion for a year, but was baptized together with my husband in 1989.

I never looked back, and our marriage was once again in unity. Slowly but surely everything started to fall back into place. While we still have trials from time to time, our marriage has been strengthened by God's abiding love. Having the privilege and honor of knowing the truth and with God at the helm guiding and directing us, our marriage flourished and was strengthened. We have been married for 31 years this July.

## My Wife Must Be a Saint for Putting Up With Me All These Years

by Joe Dumond

I was working away from home in construction and came home once or twice a month. While away one time, I heard Mr. Armstrong on the radio late one night, and he tweaked my interest. Twice that same week I heard him again right after work, and he angered me, somehow insulting my intelligence. I ordered the booklets and was going to prove him wrong.

Shortly after this I was laid off for the winter as was normal, and I started to read day and night, locking myself in the spare room and not coming out for days. Once in a while I would rush out and tell my wife to look at what I had just learned. I got

the look, like, "Who cares?" She was busy with our second child, who had just arrived one year after the first. She was busy taking care of them while I hunkered down to read. This did not go over well.

At the end of winter I had finally admitted I was wrong concerning all that Mr. Armstrong had said. I started to keep the Sabbath by locking the door and not going out of the room until sunset. This, too, was not good, as my wife needed help with the babies, but I wasn't going to "work" on the Sabbath.

I soon started to attend services in Toronto in the spring of 1982. Six weeks later I landed a job in Quebec and was gone. My wife was pleased, as my religion, too, was gone. But while I was away I was attending Sabbath services and learning and getting excited. This was great stuff! I would come home once a month for the weekend. Arriving home around supper Friday night, I rested for the Sabbath and went to services on Saturday away from the family for more than half the day. Saturday night I spent with the family as well as Sunday, but I would have to leave to go back to Quebec late Sunday afternoon. And so it was all summer and fall up until Dec. 24—for three years.

That first year in the Church I had learned about Christmas and couldn't believe how duped I was. I told my wife we no longer were going to keep Christmas, and she protested. I arrived home Christmas eve late, and we argued on Christmas day and I threw out the tree with all the decorations still on it. I was, after all, the head of the family and the man of our house. I was in charge!

So for the next month I slept on the couch and fed myself and was ignored totally. But I was not yet done being stupid. I figured all I had to do was convince my wife and all would be normal again. So for the rest of that winter I tried to change her. And then I was baptized just before Passover. Now I was really a Christian and things would soon get easier.

I am telling you all this not for my glory but to my shame. In my calling I was trying to call everyone who was dear to me so we all could be saved together. But the more I tried to convince my wife and extended family members, the more alienated I became. And that also meant that my wife was being alienated, too, because of me. Soon very few friends and relatives would visit.

So I would develop friends in the Church. And as I introduced them to my wife, some of them would try to convince her. I found this funny at first, hoping someone would crack her. But it was years before I learned my lesson.

My wife hates to hear the words *pagan beliefs*. We have worn her out with this expression.

Surprisingly, my wife and I are still married and will be celebrating our 25th anniversary this Feast. She has conceded to come to the feasts every

## What About the Kids? and Other Issues

There are many other stories and experiences of those with mates not in the Church. The articles above don't really address the challenges of raising children in this situation. And everyone we heard from would tell unmarried people not to marry outside the faith. Those God calls while already married are in a much different situation from those believers who disobey God's teaching and marry an unbeliever.

One member wrote: "I am a member of UCG, and I am married to a non-believing mate. We've

been married 12 years . . . I'll be honest in saying it hasn't always been easy. I don't believe any good marriage is . . .

"At times my husband feels as though he is on the back burner. There are so many issues you should not have to face if married to a member of your faith. For example, just to name the obvious: christenings, Easter, X-mas, Holy Day breaking and, most of all, breaking of the weekly Sabbath. I can't count the number of [events] we have not been able to attend as a family or just as a couple because

they clash with God's Sabbath . . .

"Now, as my children grow up, I am constantly explaining why Mum does something and Dad does something else. Dad goes to church on Sunday, Mum on Saturday. Dad eats certain foods, Mum doesn't. You have to work out what to do about unleavened bread in a loving way towards your mate. The list goes on and on. What happens when your husband/wife tells you you can't take your kids to church or you cannot teach them what you believe God wants you to?"

# Hearts of Unseen Valor and Misjudged Intentions

year I have gone but one. I do not object to her beliefs anymore, and we agree to disagree. I now defend her from zealous Church members. I no longer force her to come to services, and I don't preach to her about things at all. Once in a while she reads *The Good News* to see what I am up to, and then asks some questions. So, after 20 years, we now have some peace in our relationship. My wife had to learn to be a wife, as all brides do, but mine also had to learn to do this with a husband who was away all the time for half the year and who was a religious "fanatic" as well. And yet she stuck it out.

Paul says that if the spouse is willing to stay with the Christian, then let him or her stay. And if the spouse wishes to depart, let him or her go. He also said you should not be unequally yoked. These things were said to me when my wife and I were considering divorce. But Jesus said God allowed divorce because of our hard hearts. Various things were said to tempt me to leave. God wants to know what kind of character I have, and it is best shown under stress.

But the whole point to all this suffering, I have learned, is that it was brought on by me alone. No one else. Not my wife—just me. Because in all the things I was learning, I was not allowing her time to learn. The more I forced her to do things, the harder her heart was against God. The more brethren gave her that "pagan" dig, the less she wanted to listen. The more religious people were in front of her, the more disgusted she grew. It took me about 10 years to learn that the light that shines on the hill doesn't make a noise. Not a peep. And yet I was called to be that light.

And that's another thing. I was the one called, not my wife at this time. God knew I needed the work done to me the most, so He called me first. I see now that my wife is already a saint—she must be for putting up with me all these years. When God wants her to come, He will call her and she will come.

I wanted so badly to be like other Church families. It saddened me. Then after many years I realized how special my situation was, but I could not figure out why until recently. The answer is, love. Real love is the thing that God is trying to form in all of us. He works with some one way, and with others another way. You have to love your mate even when he or she ridicules and makes fun of you. You have to love her when you feel all alone in your beliefs. And you have to help others so you don't think only of yourself.

Yes, it is hard at times, and it's easy to feel, "Woe is me." But you are learning things that married couples and singles in the Church will never completely understand. It is a strange position. Yet a unique one. Congratulations on the blessing that God is about to give you if you allow Him to. It will be a challenge. But God is going to do a work with you, if you let Him. **UN**

■ Can we truly know the struggles going on in others' hearts? Can we judge their motives and intents?

by Janna Thomas

The human heart is a true and enigmatic mystery. On any teeming street corner, people ebb and flow in an earthy dance of rhythm and calm and normalcy. Meanwhile, buried deep within them are hearts of unseen valor, fighting battles of epic proportion.

Untold dramas written within human flesh play endlessly to an empty arena—visible only to the eyes of their Creator. For only God can know the true and intimate struggles of the human heart.

## Hidden Hearts

Innumerable volumes have been written about the heart of man and its unfathomable depths. Henry David Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." This well-known quotation shouts of battles unchronicled and whispers of hidden tumult.

Behind smiling eyes an entire universe exists of which we know nothing—a universe whose physiological makeup repels all intrusion. It is a solitary universe and can be nothing else, for it was designed to allow complete access to only one being—the Creator God.

It is not given to man to truly know the heart of another. We cannot read it like words on paper. We cannot absorb it like sunshine on our skin. We cannot know it in the multitude of ways God gave us to discern the world around us.

At best we can make empathetic guesses as to its content, based on similar experiences. But the wonderful complexities that shape each individual are so unique and diverse that not even identical circumstances can create identical thoughts, emotions,

*Life is often hard, and our choices are seldom easy. Satan preaches his own message, and it is not one of tolerance or compassion. He is an accuser, among other things (Revelation 12:10).*

challenges and responses. Even our closest relationships allow us only a limited glimpse inside the heart of another.

We can work beside someone every day for years and have no idea what wars within him or her on a daily basis. We can sleep beside our spouse for a lifetime, with little concept of their private demons, personal fears or inward struggles, unless he or she chooses to enlighten us. Even then, we may have less than a true picture. Jeremiah 17:9-10 warns us that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart."

## Reserving Judgment

Is it any wonder God reserves judgment for Himself, or that we are so often warned by Scripture to avoid the temptation to take it upon ourselves? Because while we may correctly discern another's actions, to know with certainty his heart and motivation is simply beyond us.

Yes, there are laws that govern behavior and rightly so. God's own commandments set standards that must be upheld regardless of individual motivations or intentions. The safety, peace and ultimate welfare of mankind demand it. God has given us these laws for our good and not our harm. "You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you" (Deuteronomy 4:40).

Yes, He has set in motion absolutes both right and wrong, and instructed us in them. The danger, however, lies not in what we know, but what we cannot.

It is a human temptation to assume we know the inner thoughts and motivations of another human being. The sad fact, however, is that usually our judgment of another's heart is a more accurate reflection of our own than of his or hers. How often have we said, or had said to us, such things as, "Oh, I know what you're thinking" or "I know exactly why you did that"? But do we really? Can we ever?

## Judging a Friend

Suppose I called a friend and found her unresponsive and seemingly unconcerned with my feelings and problems. She quickly ends our conversation with vague platitudes that leave me with a buzzing phone and wounded feelings. My immediate assumption might be that she was either uncaring in general, or disinterested in me in particular. I might even recall that our last three phone conversations have gone more or less the same. On the basis of the only data available to me, her actions, I judge

her to be a bad friend and make the decision not to call her again.

Meanwhile, my friend may well be locked in a life-or-death struggle of her own. She may be battling depression or even thoughts of suicide. Perhaps she is coping with overwhelming family problems or a health crisis that is all consuming. She may be using every ounce of fortitude and valor available to simply get through each new day. Her distance and lack of response may have everything to do with her and nothing to do with me. Yet I have judged her from the only perspective available to me, which is my own. I cannot see inside her heart.



*Suppose I called a friend and found her unresponsive and seemingly unconcerned with my feelings and problems. She quickly ends our conversation with vague platitudes that leave me with a buzzing phone and wounded feelings.*

## Shine a Light of Compassion

This is written to shine a light of compassion into the depths of the human spirit, and remind us that all of mankind is involved in a death match, and that each human heart is a battlefield. The war is more complex and difficult because demonic spirits often enter the fray. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Life is often hard, and our choices are seldom easy. Satan preaches his own message, and it is not one of tolerance or compassion. He is an accuser, among other things (Revelation 12:10). Satan assumes for himself a role that not even the other angels undertake. Jude 9 tells us that the archangel Michael, when contending with the devil over the body of Moses, dared not bring a reviling accusation against him. If the angels dare not accuse even Satan, then surely we ourselves should exercise great caution when tempted to assume we know another's heart.

Matthew 7:1-2 gives us a stern warning that should make the hair on our neck stand up. "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

Though normally used to illustrate forgiveness, the parable of the unforgiving servant is also an excellent example of this principle in use. In this story, a servant wanted forgiveness for his debt, and his master,

moved with compassion, released him from it. However, the unforgiving servant would not extend the same courtesy to his own fellow servant, but rather judged him more harshly. The master revoked his clemency, and applied the same standard of judgment toward the unforgiving servant as he himself had applied towards the second man (Matthew 18:21-35).

Jesus is our Master. We should be very careful what standards we put into place in our own hearts, for they may well be reflected back to us.

Life demands discernment. Yet God forbids condemning judgment. This makes it imperative that we recognize the difference, and err on the side of caution. Maybe that scowl on your spouse's face is just a toothache, and not an ill-tempered gesture designed to put you in your place. Perhaps the minister really wasn't trying to avoid you last Sabbath, but merely failed to see you approaching.

Or maybe your assumption was correct, and for just that one second the person was battle weary or slipped up. As Ecclesiastes 7:21-22 warns, "Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others."

Often we misjudge both the actions and intentions of others. Sometimes, we really are right. But either way, we can and should have compassion, knowing that we, too, will lose some battles in our epic struggle for eternal life. But knowing also, that with God's mercy, which triumphs over judgment, we can and must win the war. **UN**

*Janna Thomas attends the Sherman, Texas, congregation.*

# What's the Solution for Africa's Biggest Problem?

■ The African continent has been devastated by AIDS, and the problem will get far worse before it gets better. Yet on a recent trip to Ghana I saw a glimmer of hope at the Kumasi Virgins Club. If only people everywhere would embrace the Seventh Commandment, the AIDS crisis could be permanently solved.

by Melvin Rhodes

I had been invited to speak to the Kumasi Virgins Club.

They meet every Sunday afternoon. When I was first asked to address the group, I was told there would be about 100 people there, representing all faiths. There were, in fact, 284. Not all the members were present. The club has 420 registered members, all virgins, each one committed to abstaining from sexual activity until marriage.

Kumasi is Ghana's second biggest city. Imagine a "Virgins Club" in Los Angeles or Birmingham in England. The group in Ghana is supported by a local radio station. All the members are young and all seemed enthusiastic supporters of the group's goals.

Wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the words "I am proud to be a virgin," rarely have I spoken before such an attentive audience. Not only were they attentive, they very patiently listened while all my words were translated from English into Twi, the local language of the Akan people. Those who were bilingual heard the same message twice.

## A Continent Headed for Destruction?

The club is fairly new, started in response to the spreading threat from HIV/AIDS. Ghana's democratically elected president, John Kufour, instituted the "ABC" campaign, which has been successful in Uganda, another African nation on the other side of the continent.

"A is for Abstinence,  
B = Be faithful after marriage,  
If you can't, use a Condom (C),  
It's as simple as A-B-C."

So proclaim the billboards in a desperate attempt to stop a disaster that threatens to destroy the continent.

That's no exaggeration.

Ghana is not the worst-hit country. The part of the continent most affected by this devastating plague is southern Africa. South Africa, the most modern of all African nations, has the world's largest number of HIV-positive citizens, about 5 million.

Neighboring countries have a higher percentage of people infected with the HIV virus. In Botswana and Zimbabwe about 40 percent of the adult population is HIV-positive, all destined to die within a relatively short period of time. Appeals for cheaper drugs from the West can only delay death, not prevent it.

Meanwhile, the living can spread the virus to others.

There are no official statistics on Ghana, but neighboring Burkina Faso tested all the women giving births in hospitals last year and found 15 percent were HIV-positive. Since borders don't mean much in Africa, it can be safely assumed that the same figure applies in all the countries nearby, including Ghana.

When the disease affects 5 percent of the population, it's considered out of control. The 15 percent will soon grow to 30 percent, then 40 percent and so on. Sexually transmitted diseases spread rapidly. AIDS in Africa is almost exclusively spread through heterosexual relationships.

## God's Solution for the AIDS Epidemic

I invited the Virgins Club members to save the continent of Africa. My wife and I, with our children, lived in Ghana when the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was first identified, back in 1981. Twenty two years later the plague of AIDS is thousands of times worse than it was back then. We've lost over two decades in fighting this disease. Millions of people in Africa are already dead. Millions more are dying.

Yet, in the midst of all this negativity, good news can be found. The good news is that there is a sure cure for AIDS. In another two decades we could be completely free of the HIV virus if only everyone would do as the members of the Virgins Club are doing—and pledge themselves to *abstinence before marriage, fidelity within*.

Option "C," some are surprised to learn, is no guarantee at all. Condoms are not 100 percent effective against pregnancy. Nor are they against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. So much for educational campaigns that emphasize "safe sex"—a euphemism for "use a condom." There is only one guarantee that you won't get AIDS—and that's for both partners to enjoy the sexual relationship *within marriage only*.

That's the way God intended it to be. When God created Adam, He said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18). Then God created Eve. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (verse 24).

On a continent where polygamy is widely practiced, the Genesis account was quite revealing: God's intention was that Adam should have only one wife, just the one sexual partner.

The Ten Commandments emphasize this point. "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Adultery takes place when a person engages in sexual activity outside of a marriage.

## Sex: Playing Russian Roulette?

The apostle Paul warns us to "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). He then added the words: "Every sin that

a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."

What did Paul mean when he added those words?

Immediately, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) come to mind. Again,



The Kumasi Virgins Club shirts proclaim "I am proud to be a virgin" (photos by Logan Smith)

Ghana keeps no official statistics on these. But along with the HIV virus come other STDs.

In the United States, STDs are a major and growing problem among young people. In 1967, when I graduated from high school, only 1 in 32 grads had an STD. By 1983 that figure had increased to 1 in 18. Now it's *1 in 4!* And get this: In 1967 there were only five STDs to be concerned about. Now there are 30, and *one third of them are incurable*.

HIV is a virus. Science has never yet

found a cure for a virus. Herpes, the most common STD, is also a virus. It irritates and is often quite painful. It's also highly contagious and stays with you for the rest of your life should you become infected. Other STDs can leave you infertile, unable to give birth to children.

In 1967 the biggest fear parents had was that their daughter would get pregnant outside of marriage. While that's still a major concern for parents, most of those who were around in the 1960s are not aware of the fact that today their daughters are *four times more likely to acquire an STD than to become pregnant*. Yet many parents, influenced by the '60s sexual revolution, put their daughters on the pill, giving them the green light for sex.

That decision can be fatal. Every hour, an American teenager becomes HIV-positive.

## Damaging the Mind as Well as the Body

God knew what He was doing when He said, "You shall not commit adultery." Sex outside of marriage is *always* a sin, *always* wrong and *always* harmful. And not just sexual intercourse, either. The HIV virus can be passed from one person to another in many ways. The same is true with other STDs.

Even if all possible precautions are taken, sexual activity outside of marriage remains a sin. That's another side to the apostle Paul's warning.

Illicit sex—sex not approved of by God—harms the mind as well as the body.

Wrong sexual habits can be developed during the teenage and young adult

years that leave a lasting negative effect. Then when a person finally does marry, he or she has formed a habit of moving from one partner to another and it is more difficult to remain faithful. Contracting one or more STDs, unwanted pregnancies, abortions and divorce are the frequent consequences.

Even if these don't take place, comparisons can be made between a spouse and former sexual partners that result in feelings of dissatisfaction. Feelings of rejection as relationships break up cause some to build an emotional wall around themselves, making it difficult to fully give themselves to their partner in marriage.

Are the consequences worth the few minutes of illicit pleasure?

## Only One Solution

In this age of AIDS, we hear many cries made around the world with increasing frequency. Always the message is repeated that we need more money to fight AIDS—money to educate people about the disease, money for hospitals to take care of the sick and dying, money for the drugs that enable people to live longer, money for educational programs. The list is endless.

But the fact remains that millions of dollars have already been spent on these things—and little has been achieved.

Only one message is guaranteed to work. Only one approach will totally end the scourge of AIDS.

*Abstinence before marriage, be faithful within.*

Or, as the LORD commanded in Exodus 20:14 almost 4,000 years ago, "You shall not commit adultery." **UN**

## The High Cost of Ignorance

Few people have ever considered the Bible a reliable guide for good physical and mental health. Yet scattered throughout its pages are priceless laws and principles that would literally save millions of lives every year if we would only pay attention to them.

Consider, for a moment, one of today's deadliest killers, AIDS. Probably a week doesn't go by that you don't see the disease mentioned in the headlines or referred to on the evening news. It is the fourth-leading cause of death worldwide.

Yet AIDS is entirely preventable and wouldn't even exist if people only lived according to the laws revealed in the Bible.

How did the AIDS epidemic begin? No one knows for sure, but now we know that African green monkeys carry a closely related virus naturally in their blood. Several decades ago the virus jumped to human beings, apparently when hunters killed and butchered infected monkeys for food. Once it entered the human bloodstream, the virus proved to be both deadly and unstoppable.

But it need not have started there, and wouldn't have, if people obeyed God's laws that forbid eating the flesh of apes—a biblically designated "unclean" animal. God's Word clearly states that some animal flesh should never be eaten (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).

Even so, AIDS could have ended there. But it didn't. Those who were initially infected had sexual relations with their spouses—but with others as well. In violating God's laws forbidding adultery (Exodus 20:14), those who were infected unknowingly passed on a death sentence to their unsuspecting spouses and sexual part-

ners. Some of them, in turn, passed it on to others.

In the Western world the disease—still unnamed and unidentified—was first noticed in homosexual men, among whom it was spreading like wildfire. Researchers soon discovered that common homosexual practices were highly effective ways to spread the deadly virus. Such behavior is condemned in the Bible (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

In most other countries AIDS spread as a heterosexual disease (between men and women). Prostitution, extramarital and premarital sex—all violations of God's commands—saw to it that the epidemic would continue its grim march around the globe. Another factor—sharing syringes to inject illegal drugs—also played a significant role.

Now, because of all of these factors, AIDS is firmly entrenched throughout the world. At any of these stages along the way, the disease could have been confined so that it would have died out within a generation—had people not persisted in disobeying God's laws. The sins of others have affected many innocent people as well, including babies, spouses and hemophiliacs who received tainted blood transfusions.

The world spends some \$60 billion a year treating AIDS, educating people about it and trying to slow its advance. It has already taken some 20 million lives; another 36 million live under what amounts to a death sentence.

That's a terribly costly price to pay for ignorance. Isn't it about time we paid attention to what God says, not only about health but about all aspects of our lives?

Scott Ashley

# Treasure Digest

## Tone Your Voice

The tongue can kindle a forest fire! It defiles the whole body; it is an unruly evil and full of poison. God inspired James to write (James 3:5-8). "No man can tame the tongue," he said. That's a frightening thought! But Proverbs 21:23 does state that whoever guards his mouth keeps himself from troubles. Putting these two thoughts together, we recognize that we all make mistakes in our communication, and we can all do better.

The choice of words is important. But note that the same words, spoken with a different tone of voice, take on a whole new meaning. Simple statements such as, "Don't do that," can be spoken in jest, in teasing, as an instruction or as a threat—all depending on the tone of voice.

As a young man I worked for a manager who was extremely offensive. He didn't threaten anyone physically, but he beat a lot of people up with his voice. I resolved never to be like that and to watch my words and my tone of voice.

Paul addressed

the need to comfort one another with the words in 1 Thessalonians 4:18. How those words are spoken—the tone of voice—will make all the difference.

Observation is how we learn. Pay some attention to the tone of others and to your own. (We are often deaf to our own voices.)

We need to listen to ourselves sometimes. Do we catch the subtle and not-so-subtle way that we change our voices? Does authority creep in? Do we cancel discussion, or are our words fitly spoken (Proverbs 25:11)? Can we be comforters? It's our choice! If we control our tongues and tone our voices, we will reap the benefits and be a blessing to those around us.

Robert Berendt

## What's Wrong These Days?

Is anything wrong anymore? Today, it seems, it depends who you ask. The Barna Research Group ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)) asked more than a thousand American adults about 10 behaviors to see which they felt were "morally acceptable." A majority felt gambling (61 percent), cohabitation (60 percent) and sexual fantasies (59 percent) were OK.

"There were also huge differences in moral viewpoints based upon a person's generation," the report said. The younger the person, the more likely the person is to feel that these actions are acceptable. So morality looks likely to continue to decline. In just two years, for instance, acceptance of abortion jumped 25 percent, and acceptance of gay sex increased 20 percent.

## More Sad Statistics

*Family Circle* magazine surveyed American families in 1993 and again in 2003. In the Oct. 15,

2003 issue, they reported on "The State of the American Family." Their title, "Stressed but Strong," tried to put a positive spin on it, but many of the statistics were discouraging:

- "The number of people who say their family is very close, for example, dropped from 75 to 55%."

- Now 36 percent are concerned about illegal drugs being sold in their neighborhoods, compared to 23 percent 10 years ago.

- Families with members facing depression or another psychological disorder jumped from 17 to 49 percent.

- "28% of parents are very satisfied with the time they spend with their kids versus 48%" in 1993.

- 81 percent ate dinner together once a week or more (it was 90 percent 10 years ago), but now 46 percent attend religious service less than yearly to never. It was 30 percent in 1993.

Speaking of meals, *U.S. News and World Report* highlighted what kids are eating in the Nov. 17, 2003, issue (pages 63-64). "Only 2 percent of children currently eat a diet consistent with the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommendations . . . Overall children's caloric intake increased by about 80 to 230 calories a day (depending upon age) between 1989 and 1996 . . . In 1977, 1 in 10 meals kids ate was from fast-food restaurants; by 1996, 1 in 3 meals was fast food. Fast-food kids' meals contain nearly twice the calories of meals prepared at home."

## U.S. Draft Rumors

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported on Nov. 8, that "talk of a draft has heated up in recent days."

According to the article (titled "Talk of a Draft Grows Despite Denials by White House"), "The Defense Department fueled the debate this week when it placed a notice on its Web site asking for 'men and women in the community who might be willing to serve as members of a local draft board.' The notice, which appeared on an official Web page for the Selective Service System titled "Defend America," explained: 'If a military draft becomes necessary, approximately 2,000 Local and Appeal Boards throughout America would decide which young men, who submit a claim, receive deferments, postponements or exemptions from military service, based on Federal guidelines. Positions are available in many communities across the Nation.' The Pentagon wouldn't comment on the notice, and by yesterday it had been pulled from the Web site without explanation."

Young men and women may want to discuss this with their pastors, and see the *Fundamental Belief* on "Military Service and War" ([www.ucg.org/booklets/FB/militaryservice.htm](http://www.ucg.org/booklets/FB/militaryservice.htm)).

## Early Christian Pacifists

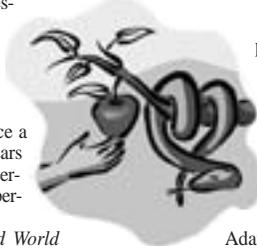
*Christianity Today* published a commentary Oct. 28, 2003, showing historical records of early Christians opposed to military service and war.

"Pacifism is characteristic of the early centuries of Christianity in someone like the North African apologist Tertullian (160-220 A.D.), who regularly warned Christians to distance themselves from pagan culture. He wrote: 'How will he serve in the army even during peacetime without the sword that Jesus Christ has taken away? . . . We are not allowed to wear any uniform that symbolizes a sinful act' (On Idolatry 19.3).

"The third-century Roman Presbyter Hippolytus wrote the Apostolic Tradition, Canon 16 (ca. 215 A.D.) which opposed serving in the military

as a matter of church discipline: 'A soldier in the lower ranks shall kill no one. If ordered to do so, he shall not obey, and he shall not take an oath. If he does not want to comply with this directive, let him be dismissed [from the church].'"

## Back to the Forbidden Fruit Incident



God has invited us to partake of the tree of life. Throughout history, society has traditionally sought out the other tree—bearing the forbidden fruit. Some few would pursue the path of eternal life.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve seemed to overlook the wonderful tree of life. Perhaps its appearance was not so outstanding. Although when the tree of life is described in the last book of the Bible, its effect is described as most extraordinary:

"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2).

In the Garden of Eden, Eve's curiosity was inevitably aroused by the appearance of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6, emphasis added).

However, had it not been for the strange serpent that hung around the tree, Eve may not have been as readily seduced or enticed. Even though she acknowledged that God, her Father, had forbidden the fruit of this tree, she did not resist this creature. So she was drawn in and evidently overwhelmed by the mysterious, lying spirit.

Once the very first human beings had thus rejected God's way, the tree of life was shut off from them.

Now, in this very end time, God has once more offered us the tree of life, to partake of the fruit of

His very Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 5:9-10). But have we forgotten about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? It seems to have thrived on the earth, feeding on man's insatiable desires. Our Creator said: *Don't go there. What choice will we make? Will we choose life?*

Manfred Fraund  
Los Angeles, California, congregation

## Don't Forget Us!

Have you ever wondered what it was like for the apostle Paul while he was in prison? Or how about Joseph? How do you think they felt? Lonely, depressed or abandoned?

Though he wasn't in prison, the description of what Lot experienced in Sodom can give you some idea of what prison is like (2 Peter 2:7-8).

How much do we think about the shut-ins or those in prison (Matthew 25:34-36)? Some do remember the prisoners. How do I know? I am a prisoner myself, and several have extended their greetings in writing to me.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not asking you to feel sorry for us. I am guilty of sin and am paying the price for it. I have also repented of my sins and have been forgiven. I was even able to take the Passover this year. I feel I have been blessed in many areas.

There are many "shut-ins" out there who would love to hear from their brethren. You may be surprised at how joyous it makes them feel to get cards, letters and even visits.

Some say, "I don't know what to say." Do you think it really matters to a shut-in or prisoner what you say? Just the very fact that you were willing to reach out with the fruit of God's Spirit and touch us is all it takes. But, if it helps, what I personally enjoy are Sabbath notes, personal Bible studies, anything.

How can you get in touch with us? Your pastor will have a list of shut-ins and prisoners he is aware of.

In the passage in Matthew 25, Christ tells those who served the sick and prisoners, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Kenneth Dove  
Oklahoma

## Be Ready to Give an Answer: Why Don't You Keep Christmas?

Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, and His birth was a very important event in the history of the world. Parts of four chapters in the Bible are devoted to the events in the year or two before to several months after His birth (Matthew 1:18-2:18; Luke 1-2:38). But the Bible doesn't tell us to celebrate it.

**It Wasn't Dec. 25.** The Bible also doesn't tell us when His birthday was, but it is clear it wasn't near Dec. 25. There were shepherds in the field (Luke 2:7-8) and a census was being taken (Luke 2:1-4), neither of which would have happened in the cold, rainy month of December. The only clue the Bible gives would probably put His birth sometime in the fall. This is based on calculating from the time the course of Abijah served in the temple (Luke 1:5-8) which the Companion Bible puts as June 13-19 that year (Companion Bible, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200). Jesus was probably born about 15 months later, since He was born six months after John the Baptist. So why do people celebrate Dec. 25?

**Pagan Origins.** Though late December was an important pagan holiday to the Greeks (Bacchanalia), Romans (Saturnalia, which at times included human sacrifice) and the Persian cult of Mithra (which became the official Roman religion in A.D. 274), it seems the first time it was celebrated as Christmas was about 300 years after Christ. It was also a celebration among the Druids and Germanic tribes, who were allowed to continue their pagan rebirth and fertility customs including evergreen trees and mistletoe, even after being "converted" to the popular form of Christianity.

**God's View.** Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Jeremiah 10:2-8 show that God does not want His people to adopt pagan customs. This is also explained in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Check any encyclopedia for the origin of the customs of evergreen trees, mistletoe, wreaths and ornaments.

God does give us wonderful, meaningful celebrations that He is pleased with, and that are fun for children. But He doesn't want us to fall for a counterfeit, even if it has 4,000 years of tradition behind it!

**For More Information:** *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*; "4,000 Years of Christmas?" in the November/December 2003 *Good News*, pages 21-22.



## Local Church Updates

### Minneapolis/St. Paul Celebrate 40th Anniversary

On the Feast of Trumpets, Sept. 27, the Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, congregations celebrated the 40th anniversary of establishing God's Church in the area. Thirteen original members of the congregation were able to attend, traveling from Virginia, Wisconsin, South Dakota and various Minnesota locations.

Guests attending included Mrs. Beverly McMichael, who, along with her late husband, Sherwin, began the Minneapolis congregation. A luncheon was served by the Minneapolis congregation.

After services Jim Servidio read comments from several ministers who have served in the area and gave a little history of the congregation. Wilma and Russell Edelbach provided a photo album, copies of *The Good News* and *Plain Truth* along with letters from the Church during the '60s for members to look at.

A cake, made by Nancy Morgan in the shape of the Bible inscribed with the words from Matthew 28:19-20 and



Eleven of the 13 original Minneapolis members who attended the 40th anniversary on this year's Trumpets are pictured (photo by Jean Cline)

Matthew 16:18, along with punch and coffee were served.

Jean Cline

### Cincinnati North Young Adults Serve at Ronald McDonald House

Sept. 8, 2003, the Cincinnati North, Ohio, young adults packed up their waffle irons and fixings for breakfast and headed to the Ronald McDonald House. While most people were taking advantage of Sunday morning by sleeping in, these young adults had something far more important to do. It was time for their community service project, making breakfast for the families who were staying at the Ronald McDonald House.

This year they decided to make it even more special for the families and turn the kitchen into a restaurant, offering a menu that the families could order from. The menu had a variety of selections: pecan, chocolate chip and other



Stephanie Smith takes an order from one of the families at the Ronald McDonald House; above, Tyler Kincade, 11, and his dad, Wes, chop strawberries (photos by Janet Treadway)

ald House sits right across the street from Cincinnati Children's Hospital, so the house can offer comfortable lodging for the families of sick children. It provides a home away from home, based on each families' means to pay. No one is turned down because of lack of funds. There are shuttle buses to take the families to places such as grocery stores. A family's stay can be as short as one night. But one family has been there for six years.

One of the families served breakfast was an Amish family who had to bring their newborn baby to the hospital after a home delivery that had complications. The baby would be fine, but the family was very grateful to the hospital and Ronald McDonald House.

The youngest person to help out was Tyler, 11, the son of Carmen and Wes Kincade. Tyler had a firsthand experience of staying in the hospital last summer when he had a bike accident and split his knee open. He found out what it was like to be in the hospital with other sick children. Tyler said he loved coming to help because "it is my way of helping sick children and their families."

Janet Treadway

### Women's Group Begins in Durban

A women's group was started in Durban, South Africa, two months before the Feast of Tabernacles. The group meets once a month for tea and to learn various skills.

Card making was the skill practiced in the first session. Various individuals contributed materials, and each of us used them in a unique way. The lesson we are learning here is that we are different threads and colors being woven together into a tapestry. The second session

waffles, omelets made to order, beef-bacon and eggs.

The Ronald McDonald

was tile painting. Whoever knows a skill is being given an opportunity to teach and help the others to learn.

Our pastor, André van Belkum, has started leadership training for the men. The women's group meets with his wife, Elise, and Proverbs 31 comes to life. We hope to have a garage sale so that we could have money for the materials required for the various skills we would like to learn. Later we hope to be able to go on outings together to art galleries, arts and crafts shows and so on. Mr. van Belkum has even suggested that he would do a Bible study especially for women.

We hope to grow from strength to strength as far as what God requires of a woman.

Patti-Ann Naidoo

### Newspaper Interviews Member About Feast

The *Kentucky New Era* ran an article titled "Congregation Set to Observe Traditional Biblical 'Feast'" in its Sept. 27-28 edition. The article included extensive quotes from Gerry Russell, a member in Kentucky, and ran on the first page of the religion section.

"We have a member (fairly new) who works for the paper," Mr. Russell told *United News*. "His taking off for the Feast and Holy Days has caused a lot of interest at the paper! And he suggested they interview me!" The editor of the paper, David Riley, interviewed him for more than an hour.

The article began: "Members of a local church congregation will be reaching into the present and well into the past as they celebrate the traditional 'Feast of Tabernacles' next month."

After listing some of the Feast sites and the dates, the paper mentioned that Mr. Russell would be returning to his native country to attend the Feast in the Lake District area of England.

"Russell said the word 'feast' can be misleading since eating is only a small part of the weeklong observance. 'There're services every day, family activities, Bible studies and lots of time to get around and enjoy the area,' he said."

The paper then discussed all seven of the annual festivals of Leviticus 23 as well as the Sabbath, gave statistics on local membership and *Good News* readership, and quoted from the Church's Web site:

"The church traces its origins to the early first-century church founded by Jesus, its Web site says. 'We follow the same teachings, doctrines and practices established then.'"

The article concluded with Mr. Russell's phone number for more information.

### Paper Features Football Player Who Doesn't Play Friday Nights

Jerod Brunick made the sports' page of his local newspaper when he was in the line-up to play his first varsity football game Oct. 30—a Thursday, instead of the normal Friday night games. Jerod and his family attend the Watertown, South Dakota, congregation.

The Watertown Public Opinion ran the article, titled "Arrows' Brunick to Make His Varsity Debut," by Roger Merriam, in their Oct. 30 edition.

The article began, "It seems ironic that Watertown senior Jerod Brunick's first varsity football game could also be his last.

"The 205-pound Brunick, in his second year with the Arrows, is expected to start at defensive tackle tonight (Thursday)," Mr. Merriam wrote. The Thursday game was a first-round playoff game.

The article continued, "'Yeah, I'm pretty anxious to find out how I do,' said Brunick, the son of Edward and Claudia Brunick of Watertown. 'I know I can do real well. It just depends on what mind set you're in.'"

"It will be the first varsity appearance for Brunick, who has practiced with Watertown's varsity for all of the past two seasons and even played on the Arrow junior varsity this year. He hasn't played in a varsity game because of his religion—which celebrates the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

"The Brunicks are members of the United Church of God in Watertown, which holds services three Saturdays a month at the Country Inn and Suites. One Saturday each month, the local congregation combines with one from Sioux Falls and holds services in Brookings.

"Since most area high school football games are played on Friday nights, Brunick has yet to suit up or play for the Arrows. He hasn't even seen the team play live.

"'It's [the Sabbath's] supposed to be a day when you draw closer to God. You don't do daily labors and try to focus on God in what you do,' Jerod said. 'Competing is not considered very God-centered. It doesn't bother me that I can't play Friday nights because I know it's right because of my convictions.'"

The article included a family history of some of Jerod's older brothers' football achievements. Jerod is the second youngest of seven boys. The article continued:

"Jerod Brunick says he still feels very much a part of the team even though he and each of the Brunick children has been either partly or fully home-schooled. Most of his education is taught by his mother, but he does take music—he's been selected to All-State Orchestra—and also competes in football and track at WHS."

The article quoted Mrs. Brunick, who

expressed appreciation to the school district for allowing her children to participate in extra-curricular activities.

"Our children are talented in those areas. We encourage them to develop their God-given talents and to use them to the glory of God," Claudia Brunick said."

After describing Jerod as one of the fastest and strongest players on the team and his contributions in practice, the article continued:

"Brunick kept up with his teammates and their performance mostly by watching game films on Mondays. He admits, however, that he saw little of the previous O'Gorman game because he was away for a week with a church function."

### Engelbart Youth Fund Sponsors Belgian Campers

The Ozzie G. Engelbart Memorial Youth Fund provided the airfare for two young people from Belgium to come to Camp Heritage in Pennsylvania in August.

René Kasper, 18, attended the camp and his brother Jako, 21, helped with soccer. They are from Halenfeld, Belgium, and have attended the United Church of God in Dormagen, Germany, for the last three years. They started attending, along with their older brother Eric, on their own. René will be going to a technical school after completing his high school, and Jako is a first-year university student in Bonn, Germany.



René and Jako Kasper from Halenfeld, Belgium, came to Camp Heritage assisted by the Ozzie G. Engelbart Memorial Youth Fund

Originally the Ozzie Engelbart Memorial Youth Fund announced the selection of two young people from the Philippines to come to a United Youth Camp in the United States this past June. Unfortunately, they were not able to receive visas from the American embassy and could not come.

Established in honor of the late Oswald G. Engelbart, the fund is dedicated to enable teens from international areas to participate in a Christian camp experience in the United States.

Ozzie Engelbart, as he was more commonly known, was a minister of Jesus Christ for 32 years. From 1997 through 1999 he was involved with the United Youth Camp at Pinecrest, Missouri.

Mr. Engelbart died on March 31, 2000. In order to continue his life work of helping young people have opportunities to learn proper spiritual values as

taught by the Word of God, his family started the Ozzie G. Engelbart Memorial Youth Fund, now coordinated by LifeNets ([www.lifeneets.org/oge/](http://www.lifeneets.org/oge/)).

Tina Engelbart and Victor Kubik

## 144 Complete ABC Mini-Sampler in Jefferson City

"Jeremiah: A Prophet of the New Covenant" and "Where Are We Now in Prophecy?" were the two themes of the ABC mini-sampler held in Jefferson City, Missouri, over the weekend of Nov. 15 and 16. The two ABC instructors presenting the lectures were Ralph Levy and Melvin Rhodes, respectively. Dr. Levy is the registrar for the Ambassador Bible Center. Mr. Rhodes is a *Good News* writer and guest lecturer at ABC every February where he teaches the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Prior to the lectures, Dr. Levy and Mr. Rhodes gave split sermons at the combined church service held in the Ramada Inn, Jefferson City. Dr. Levy's subject was "Traditions and Ruling in the Church of God," while Mr. Rhodes spoke on "America's Founding Documents."

Attendance at the seminar was higher than expected, with extra seating needed for the church service. A total of 19 congregations were represented, with some people driving up to six hours each way to attend. Judy Noel from Lawton, Oklahoma, and James Gillespie from Chicago, Illinois, traveled the farthest.

Total attendance on the Sabbath and for the Saturday evening lectures was 185. Attendance normally drops on Sunday, as some have to work or get back home for other commitments. Attendance at Jefferson City on Sunday was 144.

All ages were represented. Particularly pleasing to both presenters was the presence of so many young people. The two youngest were Valerie Beyer of Kansas City, aged 14, and Josie Danielle Caldwell of Ft. Smith, Arkansas, 15.

The two eldest were Edna Mitchell of Collinsville, Illinois, aged 81, and Audrey Goodrich from Columbia, Missouri, aged 80.

The two eldest and the two youngest each received commemorative coffee mugs. Diplomas were given to 144 students for attending the full session.

Melvin Rhodes

## Seattle/Tacoma Host Largest ABC Mini-Sampler Yet

The Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, congregations sponsored an ABC mini-sampler over the weekend of Nov. 15-16. The initial projections were for 150 attendees. The attendance was overwhelming with 250 the first day and 200 the second day! This was the largest attendance of any of the 13 mini-samplers that have been conducted across the United States and Canada.

About 330 brethren assembled on the

Sabbath at the Tacoma Inn for services and for the mini-sampler. Many lodged at the facility, which facilitated fellowshiping. President Roy Holladay and ABC coordinator Gary Antion were the presenters for the weekend.

Mr. Holladay and Mr. Antion gave split sermons on the Sabbath and then conducted three classes in the early Sabbath evening. Sunday there were seven classes and a question-and-answer period. Mr. Holladay spoke about the influence of the Gnostics and gave some keys to understanding the book of Galatians. Mr. Antion expounded the book of Obadiah and spoke about building a lasting marriage with points about how to relate to others successfully.

ABC certificates were presented at the conclusion of the day on Sunday. ABC mugs filled with chocolates were presented to the longest baptized—Lois Baughman, 1960, and Ted Brunekki, August 1963; the oldest person—Glenn McCormick, 81; the youngest people—William Boise, 8, and Bryce Foster, 9; and the longest married couple—Wally and Elsie Pate, 57 years.

Here are some comments from the brethren who attended:

"After 40 years in the Church, I am still learning new truths."

"Thank you for coming to the Northwest. We greatly appreciate this instruction and the energy you have put into it."

"Absolutely beneficial and inspiring. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to feeding the sheep."

"Thank you so much! This was a most enjoyable experience."

"What a blessing to have you come and teach us. Please come to the Portland area and teach us more. This is wonderful for those of us that are unable to attend ABC in Cincinnati."

"Wow!! A very compelling and spiritually uplifting weekend of God's Word. Since many cannot attend ABC in Cincinnati (as I would like)—especially us 'middle-aged' folks—such weekend samplers are very rewarding with the comfort of learning and understanding God's Word."

"When are you going to be back? I hope soon!"

The enthusiasm for God's Word was electric, and the brethren were very attentive and grateful. It was a pleasure to serve God's people in the Northwest. Dennis Luker and Rex Sexton and their congregations are to be commended for their service in helping make this ABC mini-sampler a huge success.

Gary E. Antion

## Mexican Tennis Player Doesn't Want "a Fame That Doesn't Last"

This article is reprinted from *Issue 1, 2003, of Us Teens magazine*. *Us Teens* is now part of *Vertical Thought magazine*.

Imagine, for a moment, you are a pro tennis star, and you have qualified to play in the semifinals in an international tournament. You have spent thousands of hours practicing for your moment of glory.

Your family and friends are among the hundreds of fans waiting for you to appear on the court. The television cameras are rolling as the sports commentators anticipate your every move.

You walk on the court and play the first point flawlessly. Then, to the dismay of the crowd, you quietly walk up to the official and refuse to finish the match. You just made one of the greatest statements of your life—you put your faith in God before your desire for fame and glory.

This exact scenario happened to Juan Manuel Elizondo Martinez, a 19-year-old young adult in the Church of God. Juan relies on God's favor to navigate through the rules and regulations of the pro tennis circuit in order to maintain his status as the eighth ranked player in Mexico while keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days.

Juan began to play tennis with his father and brothers when he was 6 years old. By the time he was 14, he was well on his way to becoming one of the top junior players in the Mexican Tennis Federation.

As Juan's skills developed, it became increasingly difficult for him to continue to play in the league due to his choice not to play on the Sabbath. Many of the other players' parents joined together to write a letter asking the Mexican Tennis Federation to prevent Juan from playing in any more tournaments in Mexico.

Juan—knowing full well that this could be the end of a promising career—decided to obey God and to leave things in His hands. After reviewing Juan's situation, the federation's directors ruled that Juan's convictions and beliefs were valid and recommended that, when possible, the league should change the dates of the matches.

When Juan turned 18, he began to play in some professional tournaments. Once again, he was forced to rely on God's favor to help him continue to play the sport he loves. Since Juan was just starting out as a professional, he needed to qualify to play in the tournaments. In order to qualify for international tournaments, qualifying matches are played on the Sabbath and then on Sunday if you win your match on Saturday. If you do not qualify, you are not allowed to play unless you are given a "wild card" slot. The Mexican officials allowed Juan to play in a few tournaments as their "wild card," however they hoped that once he experienced success, he would turn from his convictions and begin to play on the Sabbath.

The officials, coaches and many other influential tennis players began to tell Juan that, although he had the potential, it would be impossible to become a top professional player unless he began to play on the Sabbath. As described at the beginning of this article, he proved the tennis world wrong when he walked off the court during the semifinals of an international tournament played in his hometown of Leon Guanajuato, Mexico. He wanted to prove that his conviction and faith in God were stronger than the crowd and potential glory of victory.

Juan explains his faith this way: "I have been very blessed. I can see all of the different ways God works. It says in the Bible that God will work with you when you humble your heart. My

response to the officials and others who try to persuade me to play on the Sabbath is: If you obey God, He will always give you a way out.

"God is the one who will bless me in this profession. Even if God chooses not to continue to open doors for me, I will continue to keep His Commandments. This is an easy decision for me. I think about life and all I have, but when I die, all of the fun and fame that comes with it will just be a memory. It is not worth a memory to turn aside from God.

"All I truly have in this life is God's truth. Nothing is worth giving up God's promise of salvation. If I were to play on the Sabbath and become the most famous tennis player, it would be worth nothing because it is 'una fama que no dura' (a fame that doesn't last). You may feel good at the time, when you receive the trophy and the cameras are flashing, but the feeling will fade, and if all you had was that, then you are left with nothing.

"God wants us to prove to ourselves and Him that His truths are the most valuable things we have. So the decision is easy. Will I just say that I keep the Sabbath, but at the first sign of glory, riches or fame turn my back on God and His will? Or will I continue to follow and put my trust in Him? God is working with me and He cares about developing my character. If I'm unable to qualify to play in a tournament because of the Sabbath, then so be it. Nothing is worth giving up the truth. God's way is the only thing that is everlasting, and I know my reward is always safe with Him."

Kristina Hirst

## Profile: Australian Member Seeks to Serve His Native Latvia

Excerpted from the April-June 2003 issue of *United News Australia*.

Shaking hands with Eddy Kleinbergs is like grabbing a kilogram of well-battered sausages. The big thick fingers are rough and scarred from a lifetime of manual labor. They are beginning to soften a bit now that Eddy is more or less retired after celebrating his 80th birthday a week after [the 2002] Feast.

Many people in the Church have lived interesting, challenging and, at times, dangerous lives. Eddy is one of those people. The tragic experiences in his early life would give most of us a lifetime of nightmares.

Arnold E. Kleinbergs was born in 1922 in Skrunda, in the northern European country of Latvia—one of the Baltic states right next door to Russia.

In 1941, about 18 months after the beginning of World War II, 19-year-old Eddy was attending agricultural college. His parents had a small farm that Eddy would one day inherit, and he planned to spend the rest of his life peacefully farming the land.

In that summer of 1941 as Eddy cycled several hundred kilometers home for the school holidays, he was totally unaware that all his hopes and dreams for the future were already shattered!

When he arrived home there was no

one there to greet him. After searching the farm he asked his neighbors and learned the heart-stopping news. The Russian troops had invaded the area and taken the local leaders—including Eddy's father—and shot them on the spot! Then the rest were loaded in trucks and hauled away to the dreaded slave-labor camps in Siberia. Eddy never saw his mother or younger brother again, and he was only reunited with his sister and other brother in recent years.

With the war raging around him Eddy did what he could to survive. On one occasion he had a narrow escape when he fled from the lineup in front of a firing squad. He did a stint on the Russian front and, when the war ended, he found himself in a POW camp in Germany



Robyn and Eddy Kleinbergs

where he spent four months. Following that he was in a displaced persons camp for a year and a half.

He worked in Germany with a motor mechanic for some time and then, in 1949, he was given the opportunity to migrate. He had three choices—French Morocco, the Belgian coal mines or sunny Australia. As Eddy says, it wasn't a hard choice, and he landed in Sydney in September of that year.

From that time Eddy worked as a laborer on the railway lines and on many projects learning the building trade.

Meanwhile, he was listening to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast, and he was baptized in 1963. He married a young lady named Robyn Miller in 1968 and they have two adult children, Matthew and Louise.

It's always a delight to have a chat with Eddy. His down-to-earth sense of humor and his optimistic outlook and faith in God are very inspiring.

If you ever talk to him he may flex his biceps and say, "I have it here, but my wife has it up here," pointing to his head. Don't be fooled by this! Eddy is built like a grizzly bear, but his mind is just as strong as his body.

Over the past few years he has translated some of our booklets into Latvian and passed them on to Victor Kubik and Lithuanian elder, Henrikas Klovos, to post on the UCG Eastern European literature Web site. Eddy and Robyn acquired a Latvian language computer program and Robyn blindly types out what Eddy has written. And so they help to make the gospel available to his native people.

Eddy Kleinbergs and thousands like him helped to build Australia into the wealthy nation it is today. But that's not all! Under Christ, Eddy Kleinbergs and thousands like him will play a part in building God's Kingdom into the greatest kingdom this earth has ever seen.

Jim Carnochan

# Announcements

## Births

Owen and Susan Davis, along with big sister Ashley, are proud to announce a new addition to the family. Natasha Dawn was born June 25, 2003. She weighed 3.3 kilograms (7



Natasha Dawn Davis

pounds 4 ounces) and was 49.5 centimeters (19.5 inches) long. The Davises attend the Edmonton, Alberta, congregation.

Stephen and Lori Amber (Schoolfield) Mapes of Vail, Colorado, are pleased to announce the



Alden Skye Mapes

birth of their daughter, Alden Skye. She was born Sept. 30, 2003, weighing in at 6 pounds 3 ounces and was 20 inches long. Alden is welcomed home by big sisters Jessica and Elizabeth and niece Sierra Love.

Bryan and Becky (Meidinger) Stanley of the Phoenix East, Arizona,



Connor Michael Stanley

congregation are very happy to announce the birth of their first child, Connor Michael, born on Jan. 28, 2003. Connor weighed 8 pounds 13 ounces and measured 22 inches long. Proud grandparents are Donald and Marva Meidinger of Phoenix and first-time grandma ("Nana") Carol Stanley, also of Phoenix. The whole family is overjoyed with the new addition!

Phillip, Wendy (Bozarth) and Nora Finney of Grenada, Mississippi, are



Rosamund Elizabeth (Rose) Finney

happy to announce the birth of Rosamund Elizabeth (Rose). She arrived Aug. 12, 2003, weighing in at 7 pounds 4 ounces. Grandparents, Ben and Vi Finney of Jasper, Georgia, and Jim and Sue Robbins of Nashville, Tennessee, were excited to see their family growing!

John and Patricia (Pete) Myers would like to announce the birth of



Christian Matthew and Olivia Maren Myers

their twins on April 16, 2003. Christian Matthew weighed 7 pounds 1 ounce and Olivia Maren weighed 6 pounds 15 ounces. The family attends the Oshkosh, Wisconsin, congregation.

## Engagements

Thomas and Sue Anna Black of San Dimas, California, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Stephanie Caroline, to Gregory Stonick, son of Ed and Nancy Ston-



Stephanie Black and Gregory Stonick

ick of Pasadena, California. Stephanie and Greg both reside in Pasadena. Plans are being made for a wedding in Los Angeles, California, on March 4, 2004.

Toby and Jean Shipman of Big Sandy, Texas, and George and Rhonda Allen of Springville, Alabama, are thrilled to announce the engagement of their chil-



George Allen and Andrea Shipman

dren, Andrea Nicole Shipman and George Tarter Allen III. Plans are being made for a June 6 wedding in Oneonta, Alabama.

## Weddings

Mrs. James Beidleman and Mr. Dave Kolb of New Tripoli, Pennsylvania, and Mr. and Mrs. John Massie of Mattawana, Pennsylvania, are pleased to announce the marriage of their children. Rachel Elaine and Justin Quintus were wed on June 22, 2003 by Dale Schurter in Allentown, Pennsylvania.



Justin and Rachel Massie

Rachel is an elementary education major at Kutztown University. Justin is a civil engineer for Barry Isett Engineering in Allentown.

Justin and Rachel reside in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, and attend the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, congregation.

Clyde and Dee Kilough and Sam and Tessie Washington are pleased to announce the marriage of their children Brett Allan Washington and Becca Suzanne Kilough. The garden wedding took place July 27, 2003, at the Vacaville Cultural Center in Vacaville, California.

Brett and Rebecca now reside in Concord, California, and attend both the Oakland and Sacramento congregations.



Brett and Rebecca Washington

Brett and Rebecca would like to thank their parents, friends, the Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose and Stockton congregations for their love and support.

John and Linda LaBissoniere of the Knoxville, Tennessee, congregation are



Joy and Clint Porter

pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter, Joy, to Clint Porter, son of David and Luella Porter of Indianapolis, Indiana. The wedding took place Sept. 20, 2003, in the bride's hometown of Jacksboro, Tennessee. Pastor David Dobson performed the ceremony.

The bride's attendants included Sherri Renfro, Heather Kennebeck, Kate Durham and Mitra Lebastchi. The groom's attendants included David Kennebeck, Donald Artman, David LaBissoniere and Robert Keeney. The groom's niece and nephew, Maggie and Colin Keeney, served as flower girl and ring bearer. Ushers included Paul Roth, Ryan Kennebeck and Chris O'Brien.

Clint is a 2003 graduate of Depauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Joy is a senior at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where the couple currently resides.

## Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver "Bill" Barron, who attend the United Church of God in Bentonville, Arkansas, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Bill and Shirley (Franks) were married Aug. 29, 1953, in Bentonville. They were congratulated by family and friends who attended a special reception on Aug. 30 at the Springdale, Arkansas, Senior Center. On the following Sabbath in Bentonville they were honored by their Church family with a special anniversary cake and presented with a lovely 50th anniversary picture frame on behalf of the congregation by their pastor, Roger West.



Bill and Shirley Barron

The Barrons have been attending God's Church since 1969. Bill and Shirley have two sons: David Barron and his wife, Carol, and Mark Barron and his wife, Laura, all of Fayetteville, Arkansas. They have three grandchildren.

David and Teddi Treybig celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on



David and Teddi Treybig

Sept. 16, 2003. On the Sabbath of Sept. 13 the St. Petersburg, Florida, congregation presented them with a cake and a card signed by the entire congregation.

Since graduating from Ambassador College in 1973, the Treybigs have been involved in the ministry, pastoring congregations while living in Portsmouth, Ohio; Spokane, Washington; Lubbock, Texas; and the St. Petersburg-Tampa, Florida, area.

They have two children—Sharon Babcock (married to Brendan Babcock) of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and David, who resides in Dallas, Texas.

"Give and take." That is what Betty Abbott said has made their marriage work for over fifty years. Her husband, Jack, added a little humor by saying he just says, "Yes, Dear." The Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation served cake and punch after services July 5, 2003, just a day before their fiftieth anniversary, July 6.

The Abbotts had four children, two boys and two girls. One daughter died



Jack and Betty Abbott

early in life, leaving them now with two sons, David and Daniel, and one daughter, Julie.

Chuck and JoAnn Hayes were married 50 years ago in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where they lived. They were honored on their golden anniversary Sept. 20, 2003, by their three children and their families. They have six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Their daughter Cynthia Hill and her husband, Mike, with their daughter from Seattle, Washington, were there. Also present were their son, Tom, and his wife, Jamie, with their daughter from Buckeye, Arizona, and their daughter



JoAnn and Chuck Hayes

and son-in-law Kathy and Randall Rapp from Phoenix, Arizona, along with the other four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Part of the weekend celebration took place at the Wrigley Mansion in Phoenix. Chuck and JoAnn have lived in Phoenix since 1957. They were baptized in October 1964 and attend the Phoenix Northwest congregation.

## Obituaries

Ronald Premetz, 54, died Oct. 3, 2003. Ron is survived by his only daughter, Gina Marie Premetz; one granddaughter, Mercedes Starr Premetz; brothers, David "Jalie" Premetz and Daniel Premetz; and one aunt, Dorothy Smith. He also is survived by friends and coworkers.

Ron had served in the U.S. Air Force. He worked for the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a crew leader. He was an infrastructure/underground operator. His nickname was that of "The Sewer Crusader."

Ron was well-known for his smile and unique laugh. He made a significant

impact on the people with whom he worked, those he served in the Church and the lives he touched. He was always sharing and giving to others, even when he was lacking. He was baptized in 1999.

He liked Western movies, driving through the countryside and visiting park systems. He particularly enjoyed reading God's Word. He delighted in wildlife, fishing and flower gardening. His music tastes included the oldies, techno, as well as "older" country Western music. One of his favorite songs was "I Am Bound for the Promised Land."



Ronald Premetz

We look forward to seeing him again in the first resurrection. The loss is painful, but is only temporary. May God speed that day when the saints will be changed in a twinkling of an eye!

Twyla Morrison, a member of God's Church since 1969, died Sept. 20, 2003, in her home in Spokane, Washington. A private graveside service was held for her on Sept. 24, officiated by Mark Mickelson.

Twyla was born in Spokane on Nov. 13, 1932, and was a 12-year resident of

Spokane. She had operated an interior decorating company in the Seattle, Washington, area.

## Tribute: Buck Hammer

Roy Buck Hammer, 81, an elder in God's Church for almost 30 years, who was instrumental in the design and development of the Ambassador College campus in Big Sandy, Texas, suffered a major heart attack and died early Saturday morning, Nov. 15, 2003. Funeral services were conducted on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at Croley Funeral Home in Gladewater, Texas.

Buck, as he was affectionately called, is survived by two sons and daughters-in-law, Scott and Terrie Hammer and Kerry Buck and April Hammer, all of Gladewater; four daughters and two sons-in-law, Toni Cox of Las Vegas, Nevada, Becky Simpson of Longview, Texas, Barbara and Richard Husbands of Las Vegas, and Robin and Rich Johnson of Lake Arrowhead, California; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; one brother, John David Hammer of Dallas, Texas; three sisters, Jackie Carnes of Tyler, Texas, Shirley Armstrong of Bullard, Texas, and Molly Antion of Pasadena, California. He was preceded in death by his wife of 47 years, Jeanne Hammer.

Buck Hammer was born in Keifer, Oklahoma, but spent most of his life in Texas. He was among the first deacons to be ordained in the early 1950s. He and his parents, Roy and Pearl Hammer, were instrumental in the establishment of one of the first congregations of the Church outside of Pasadena, having donated property to

She is survived by a son, Bradley Smith of Issaquah, Washington, and her mother, Irma Morrison of Spokane.



Roy Buck Hammer

the Church that eventually became the Ambassador College campus in Big Sandy. Buck was instrumental in landscaping on campus, envisioning a lake and a golf course as focal points of the grounds—a vision that became reality.

Early church services and festivals were held in his parents' home in Gladewater and later, as the property was developed, in buildings that became a part of the college campus.

Buck had an interest in organic farming and was instrumental in the development of "the digester," which transformed waste into useful organic material. Working with his son Scott, he developed a company called Vital Earth Resources that continues to market organic fertilizers and soils.

Buck impacted the lives of thousands of people over the years while they were students at Ambassador or attending the Feast at Big Sandy. He was loved and respected in the Church and his community as evidenced by the over 350 people who attended his memorial service.

## Letters

### Hopeless Situations Replaced by Glorious Plan

Though I came from a different faith, my knowledge of the Bible has increased because your publications have updated me on what is happening in our world today in relation to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is comforting to know that in spite of all the hopeless situations we are experiencing and witnessing every day, this will all lead to the glorious plan our God has in store for us.

Philippines

### Hungarian Reader Learns More Than English

I must admit that initially I asked for your magazine in order to practice English in a biblical context. However, having gone through the studies, I've also acquired a far deeper knowledge of the Bible than I ever had before. Your articles help me gain a real insight into today's political events.

Hungary

### "When I Really Needed Them Most"

I would like to express my apprecia-

tion for your soul-inspiring Bible publications which I requested. I would like to inform your ministry that you are doing a very good work, and that the Bible materials have been of a tremendous blessing. They came at a time when I really needed them most.

Finland

### Bible Reading Program Like "a Fine Meal"

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and express appreciation for the Bible Reading Program. I was baptized in 1988 . . . and have been back in church now since March of 2001.

This reading program has changed my life in a very positive, educational and reflective way. It has enriched and enhanced my understanding of God's truth in a way I never would have imagined. The layout, design and style are perfect for my lifestyle and desire for a better understanding of God, His mind and character and what He desires and expects of His saints.

This program has me searching all over the Bible and acts as a springboard for other side studies. The supplemental articles are wonderful as well. So thor-

ough, enlightening and reinforcing of God's bounty He supplies to those who diligently seek Him. I like the various tools utilized to break down the understanding of certain words, meanings and concepts. I won't list them all for the sake of time, but I can tell that the writers took a lot of effort in pulling different resources to emphasize a deeper meaning and understanding of God's truth. Truly, I must say that the changes that have occurred in my walk of faith since starting this program have been very humbling and treasured beyond description because they have brought me closer to my/our loving and perfectly righteous Creator.

Each day I prepare or embark on another day of study—usually starting with this program but always including it—is like sitting down to a fine meal. It is not just "reading" the material either. I soak it in, digest it and apply the lessons in my life—all the while giving glory and thanks to our God. My prayer time and habits have improved greatly as well since beginning this program.

I believe that so far this reading program is the second most effective and important tool available in bridging me

closer to God—the first, of course, being prayer and time with God and God's sacred Word itself. I realize that God's Spirit within me is what makes possible any fruit I may bear—and I sincerely believe the "work" of this program has been a significant vehicle in encouraging me to put forth the fruit of God's Spirit, and I am only one reader! I love you all and deeply appreciate the effort, care, concern and commitment it takes to produce such a valuable tool.

One of your sisters in the faith

### Thankful to Those Who Contribute

I found your subscription card in a *Reader's Digest* magazine amongst a pile of old newspapers. I filled it in and sent it off. Little did I know that when I received my first copy of *The Good News* magazine my views on religion and God would be changed forever. I am most thankful that you do not attach a price to all this wonderful knowledge. I do not work, so do not have any money. But I am thankful to all the people who do contribute, because it is through their generosity that all of us who cannot afford to, continue on receiving your

magazine plus all the extra booklets we request, no questions asked. You serve God in the way He asks His true servants to do.

South Africa

### GN and Vertical Thought: "Very Useful"

A few months back I asked for spiritual support and you have sent me two magazines—one *The Good News* magazine and another one *Vertical Thought*. I found both the magazines very useful and it helps me a lot in my spiritual walk. Thank you so much, brothers. May God bless you. Please continue to send those two magazines and other literature for youth. Also please tell me how to send Indian rupees to you as gift.

India

Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Comments and suggestions to improve *United News* are welcome. Please let us know if you would like your name printed. Mail to: *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or e-mail mike\_bennett@ucg.org.

## News At a Glance

### Continued from page 2

Longview Community College  
Southeast Missouri State University  
Southwest Missouri State University  
Truman State University  
University of Missouri (Columbia)  
University of Missouri (Kansas City)  
University of Missouri (St. Louis)

#### Ohio

Cleveland State University  
Kent State University  
Miami University  
Ohio State University  
Ohio University  
University of Akron  
University of Toledo  
Wright State University  
Youngstown State University

#### Tennessee

East Tennessee State University  
Middle Tennessee State University  
State Tech. Institute Memphis  
Tennessee Tech. University  
University of Memphis  
University of Tennessee (Chattanooga)  
University of Tennessee (Knoxville)  
Vanderbilt University

## Camp Survey Results "Most Impressive"

"The statistics and comments are most impressive!" said Roy Holladay in announcing the results of the United Youth Camp surveys in the Nov. 19 "Home Office Update."

At the conclusion of each camp, staff members, campers and parents are surveyed about their experiences. The results of these surveys (some 1,200+) were compiled into one overall report. Here a few items from this report.

- Developing a relationship with God and learning His ways was listed by 71 percent of the campers, 73 percent of the staff and 75 percent of the parents as the main goal of camp.

- More than 90 percent of the campers, staff and parents felt that the



## What's New on the Web?

### On [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org)

#### ■ Good Works Program

First project: Needs for the Philippines.  
[www.ucg.org/goodworks/](http://www.ucg.org/goodworks/)

#### ■ UCG Commentary on This Week's News

Weekly commentaries by the United Church of God written on world news and trends, from a biblical perspective. Read these recent commentaries and more: "Jesus Christ, Ronald Reagan and Fidel Castro" "Truthful Tribal Storytelling" "What Is the Ultimate Reason to Be Thankful?"

[www.ucg.org/commentary/](http://www.ucg.org/commentary/)

#### ■ Current World News & Trends

Browse up-to-date world news events by subject categories!

[www.ucg.org/worldnews/](http://www.ucg.org/worldnews/)

#### ■ E-mail Updates and UCG eNews

Receive E-mail updates relevant to UCG members and weekly HTML newsletters with [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) updates. Sign up today!

[www.ucg.org/contact/updates.htm](http://www.ucg.org/contact/updates.htm)

### On [vcmagazine.org](http://vcmagazine.org)

■ The December *Virtual Christian Magazine* includes "Why We Need a Weekly Rest Day," "Against All Odds," "The Perfect Prayer," "What Did Jesus Look Like?" and "10 Million AIDS Orphans: A Disaster for Africa."

[vcmagazine.org](http://vcmagazine.org)

### On [verticalthought.org](http://verticalthought.org)

■ The fall inaugural issue of *Vertical Thought* has articles on "The Greatest Humanitarian Cause," "What Will 2013 Be Like?," serving in Thailand and at camp, Darwinism, hell, secrets, Q&As and more. The Web site includes additional material not in the printed magazine.

[verticalthought.org](http://verticalthought.org)

### Other Helpful Links

■ **Youth** and young adults' Web site.  
[ucgyouth.org](http://ucgyouth.org)

■ **Singles'** Web site for singles in the Church.  
[www.ucgsingles.org](http://www.ucgsingles.org)

■ **Good News Bible Reading Program.**  
[www.ucg.org/brp](http://www.ucg.org/brp)

■ **Good News Web site.**  
[gngmagazine.org](http://gngmagazine.org)

■ **Anchor:** A message of hope for those struggling with homosexuality.  
[www.anchorhelp.com](http://www.anchorhelp.com)

■ **UCG News pages** with Council meeting reports, letters, Home Office Updates, etc.  
[www.ucg.org/about/council](http://www.ucg.org/about/council)  
[www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice](http://www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice)

If you have any questions or comments, please contact: [webmaster@ucg.org](mailto:webmaster@ucg.org)

campers had accomplished their goals.

- Approximately 96 percent of the campers stated that staff members made them feel accepted most of the time.

- Parents rated the impression their children had of camp at 4.75 (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest).

Here are a few comments:

- "This has been my first year at camp. I never expected to learn so much" (camper).

- "I feel the UYC program is doing a great job in making camp fun and educational" (camper).

- "Camp created an environment that made me feel at peace. The 'Zone' was a taste of God's Kingdom" (camper).

- "I have never seen so many young people enthusiastic about others' achievements and caring for others" (staff member).

- "It was amazing to watch the campers work together and support each other and blossom spiritually. It was so inspiring!" (staff member).

- "Our daughter enjoyed all the activities, even the rainy ones. She

enjoyed the ministers coming in and visiting with them. She made many new friends and had a lot of fun. She also profited from the study of the Bible" (parent).

### Elder Ordained

Augustine Eshun Plange was ordained an elder on Oct. 14 at the Feast in Ghana. He and his wife, Comfort, serve the brethren in Ghana.

### ABC Alumni Association Forming

We are finalizing plans to create an Ambassador Bible Center alumni association that will allow ABC alumni to maintain contact with one another and be a resource of information and experience for new students. The first step is to update our files with current contact

information for all ABC alumni.

Therefore, if you have graduated from the Ambassador Bible Center, please send us the following information: name, address, e-mail address, phone number and year of graduation.

Please e-mail this information to Linda Saar at [Isaar\\_abc2003@zoomtown.com](mailto:Isaar_abc2003@zoomtown.com). Once we have contact information for everyone, we will be sending out a newsletter and survey about the alumni association.

*Matthew Fenchel*

### 38 Accepted for ABC 2004; New Instructor for the Gospels Class

As of Nov. 25, 38 students had been accepted for the Ambassador Bible Center class of 2004. Three have decided to wait for another year, leaving 35. New applications continue to trickle in for this year and a fifth one has come in for 2005.

We should have a class between 35 and 40 this year. We are grateful to God for making this experience possible for them.

Orientation will take place on Jan. 4. Classes will commence Jan. 5.

One change for next year is in the area of instruction for the Gospels class. Richard Thompson, who has diligently taught the Gospels in both semesters, has opted to not teach. He was well-loved and well-received by the students. We will miss him.

To replace Mr. Thompson, we are pleased to have Donald Ward take the class. Teaching the Gospels is not new for Dr. Ward, as he taught the class at Ambassador University for several years. He will incorporate some of his Fundamentals class into it, and that course will not be offered.

We are grateful for Dr. Ward's willingness to sacrifice three weeks each semester to teach this valuable course. Dave Johnson is also preparing for Gospels instruction to back up Dr. Ward should he need any assistance.

*Gary Antion*

## Dallas Young Adults Plan Presidents' Day Event

The Dallas, Texas, young adults will be hosting our annual Presidents' Day Weekend (Feb. 13-15, 2004) Young Adults Event. This year the theme is "Sharpen the Vision," focusing on prophecy and the Kingdom of God.

Hotel rooms have been arranged with the Holiday Inn Select North Dallas for \$55 plus tax per night. To reserve a room, contact the hotel at 972-243-3363 or [www.hoteldallas-texas.com](http://www.hoteldallas-texas.com). For those choosing to fly in, hotel guests are provided free transportation to the hotel from DFW or Love Field. Local brethren will provide rides to off-site activities.

Events will include Bible studies, Sabbath evening dinner and dance, brunch and seminars, and social activity at Park Lane Ranch

([www.parklaneranch.com](http://www.parklaneranch.com)). Registration for all of the events will be \$65 if paid before Jan. 15, 2004, or \$80 after that date.

E-mail questions to Brenda Szymkowiak at [brendasz@juno.com](mailto:brendasz@juno.com) or Amy Hooser at [amy\\_hooser@hotmail.com](mailto:amy_hooser@hotmail.com). Registration forms can be requested from Brenda Szymkowiak. Completed forms and registration fees should be mailed to Brenda at 1408 Camelia Drive, Plano, TX 75074.

Further information will be available soon at [www.ucg-dallas.org](http://www.ucg-dallas.org) and will include complete weekend details, an online registration form and online payment option. Look for the link to the Young Adults Weekend.

*Philip C. Dick*



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