



News At a Glance

Snowshoe Named New Feast Site

The 11,000-acre Snowshoe Mountain Resort in West Virginia will replace the Cincinnati Feast site for 2009 and 2010. The Village at Snowshoe, perched at 4,848 feet, offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountain ranges and is surrounded by national forest.

The Village offers a variety of quaint shops, recreational activities and dining experiences easily reached by walking a four-block long cobblestone pedestrian promenade. There are ample one-, two- and three-bedroom condos and multi-bedroom townhomes to choose from. Most are within walking distance, or a free shuttle is also available. Attendance capacity will be 1,300. Their Web site is www.snowshoemtn.com/index.htm.

We are currently negotiating contracts with facilities in the Gatlinburg and Sevierville, Tennessee, areas for 2011 to 2013.

The Northeast Festival location for 2009 is yet to be determined, but we have a couple of good possibilities and hopefully can announce a definite site in December.

All other U.S. sites should remain the same for 2009, although we are looking at a number of possibilities.

We are working hard to finalize a decision on a Feast in Greece next year. The greatest difficulty is finding a meeting hall for services that can accommodate 200 to 400 potential attendees. We will let everyone know when our plans are finalized.

Charles Melear

Bangkok Site Added

Bangkok, Thailand, will replace the Singapore Feast site in 2009. Bangkok is a modern Asian city, rich and multifaceted

See "News at a Glance," page 2

United Statistics		
	2008	Bible Study Course Graduates*, Cumulative
60,000	2007	
	2006	
50,000	2005	
	2004	
40,000	2003	Total number of lessons mailed from the home office: 1,318,802 *Total U.S. students receiving all 12 lessons: 66,420
30,000	2002	
20,000	2001	
10,000	2000	

Display Ads Now Part of Online Advertising

On Nov. 10, "display" advertising began to be incorporated into our online media presence to supplement the keyword search ads that have been running for many years. Now at both Yahoo and Google, and at their partner sites, animated display and banner advertising is complementing our search advertising for the following pieces of literature:

- *The Good News.*
- *The Ten Commandments.*
- *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.*
- *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy.*
- *Holiday or Holy Days: Does It*

Matter Which Days We Observe?

- *What Happens After Death?*
- *Is the Bible True?*
- *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Statistically, it has been shown that search advertising results improve greatly (an average of 26 percent) when accompanied by display advertising. In just the first two weeks we have already seen our cost per response drop at both Yahoo and Google for our search advertising since incorporating the display ads—proving the formula to work. In addition, the reverse is true: display

advertising results are better when accompanied by keyword search ads.

As you surf the Web, you may see some of these advertisements in the coming weeks and months. A couple of sample graphics are shown here. Obviously you can't see the animation that appears online.

Please pray for the continued success of our online advertising efforts, along with all of our goals to preach the gospel

of God's Kingdom.
Peter Eddington



New animated Web display ads



ABC Student Leaders Announced



Left photo: President Alex Henderson, Secretary Teresa VanAusdle and Treasurer Darren Henke; right photo, back row: Jason "Ace" Cockrell, Alex Henderson, Jeremy Hess, Tom Adams, Darren Henke, Jeremy Lallier, BJ Foster; front row: Michelle Rothwell, Melody Schmidt, Teresa VanAusdle, Jamie Robinson, Jody Adams and Michele "Shelly" Wolfe

by **Jeremy Lallier**

Two and a half months after the commencement of classes, the student body leaders of the Ambassador Bible Center class of 2009 were announced Nov. 13.

"We're very excited about the opportunities that the leaders will have this year. I think we have a good group to lead the class of 2009," said David Register, director of Education Programs. "We look forward to working with all of the new student leaders and a year filled with

exciting activities and rewarding service projects."

Alex Henderson, the newly selected student body president, says he was "initially...just very shocked that I was picked as president... I'm very honored and blessed to be put in the position to serve the student body. I hope I can make it a good year."

The other Ambassador Bible Center student body leaders and their appointments are: Teresa VanAusdle, secre-

See "ABC Leaders," page 4

New Daily Video Commentaries Launched

by **Clyde Kilough**

On Nov. 10 we initiated a daily, two-to four-minute video commentary for the *Good News* Web site. The *Beyond Today* hosts have been producing excellent commentaries for some time, but they are only able to shoot these once a month when they are at the home office to make programs. We have been hoping for a couple of years to get to the point where we could comment on the news as it happens, from a biblical perspective. And it's not just addressing news events; we can cover book reviews, social trends, anniversaries of major events in the past, etc. Having over 250 daily spots per year opens up a lot of room for hitting many subjects.

We have several goals with this endeavor. One is to build a relationship with an audience that comes to us for a quick, fresh voice of opinions and perspectives that would be hard to find elsewhere. Obviously, once people become familiar with us we hope they

See "GN Commentary," page 6

Inside:

- 2 *Profile:* Elizabeth Cannon; *Forward!* The Value of Freedom
- 3 *Around the World:* Australia, South Africa, Feast in Latvia, Congo, more
- 4 Jordan Update; More Feast Reports
- 5 *From the Word:* Happiness; Special Needs Children; Christian Growth
- 8 *Treasure Digest:* How Would You Answer?; Discover Your Child's Talents; "Debbie Downers"; Bucket Fillers; Children's Corner; more
- 10 *Local Church Updates; Announcements*
- 11 *Tribute*

The Privilege of Preaching the Gospel

■ Media and Communications Services operation manager shares opportunities and challenges facing the Church in preaching the gospel. Why the focus on the Internet? Why the change in *Good News* renewals and subscription numbers?

by **Larry Salyer**

"I really want to see us preaching the gospel more powerfully." Brethren tell me this everywhere I

go among the congregations. We frequently hear this sentiment expressed in personal conversations, e-mails and letters.

As members, we are well aware of Christ's commission to the Church to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19) and the prophecy that says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Fulfilling this spiritual calling is a powerful driving force within the Church. All of us recognize that our conversion is not only about us, but about doing the work Christ prescribed for the Church. We at the home office certainly feel this responsibility every day. But are we

as a Church doing it?

In our busy world with information from millions of sources swirling around us, it is sometimes hard to judge whether the work of proclaiming Jesus' gospel is being done. We may notice whatever program or project happens to cross our paths during the course of our reading, viewing or Web surfing routines, but not be aware of all the tools being used to reach people whose lives and learning patterns are different from ours.

The Gospel to All the World?

These are exciting times to be preaching the gospel. We see end-time

See "Gospel," page 5

News At a Glance

Continued from page 1

in culture and scenery. The Feast will be at the five-star Siam City Hotel located at 477 Si Ayuthaya Road, Phayathai, Bangkok (www.siamhotels.com/sch/). The Siam City Hotel has offered us a very good rate of 3,400 baht a night (about US\$100) for a single deluxe room and 3,600 baht a night (about US\$105) for a double deluxe room. These rates include a full buffet breakfast. Total cost of four group activities will be about US\$122 per person.

Brethren from Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and possibly Hong Kong will be attending the Bangkok site.

For further details, please visit our Web site at ucg.org.ph/fot09thailand/. If you are interested in attending the Bangkok Feast site you must register online at ucg.org.ph/fot09thailand/. All bookings will be handled by DJ International Travel. Once you register, your information will be forwarded to the travel agent. DJ International can also help arrange pre- or post-Feast tours to other areas of Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. If you require further information or cannot register online, please contact David Baker by e-mail at david_baker@ucg.org or by phone at (585) 624-5166.

David Baker

Six Greece Tour Lectures Online

Six lectures from the Church's educational tour of Greece during the Days of Unleavened Bread last April have been edited and are online in both Flash video and MP3 audio file formats. They are also available for download at Web resolution in .wmv and .mp3 formats. They are:

- "Cultural Background of 1 Corinthians" by David Johnson.
- "An Overview of Corinthians—Part 1" by David Johnson.
- "An Overview of Corinthians—Part 2" by David Johnson.
- "Effective Repentance, Corinthian Style" by Peter Eddington.
- "The Apostle Paul in Athens" by David Johnson.
- "Paul Preaches on Mars Hill" by David Register.

On the Ambassador Bible Center (ABC) home page at abc.ucg.org you will see all six lectures listed in the right column under "2008 Greece Tour."

Peter Eddington

Twin Cities Host 23 New Attendees for WNP Seminar

The Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, congregations hosted a *World News and Prophecy* seminar on the Sabbath of Nov. 15 in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. A total of 297 attended morning Sabbath

See "News at a Glance," page 12

Profile: Elizabeth Cannon

Elizabeth Cannon grew up in the Church of God, attending the Youngstown, Ohio, congregation. Both of her parents, James and RoseAnn Cannon, have been long-time servants of the Church, having met at Ambassador College where her father was a student and her mother was the manager of the beauty salon. Mr. Cannon currently serves as a deacon.

As a teenager, she was an avid participant in the United Youth Camp program, regularly attending Heritage, Challenger and Winter Camp. By the age of 17, she began serving as both activities and counseling staff at Winter Camp and at Pinecrest. "Going to camp helped me gain confidence through succeeding in challenging camp activities, and I made lifelong friends there. It's the place where I first understood that the biblical truths were something that I believed, not just something my parents

espoused, and it was at camp that I received my first counseling session for baptism," she said.

At the age of 18, Miss Cannon moved to the West Palm Beach, Florida, area to attend college. She graduated in the spring of 2006 summa cum laude from the Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University, majoring in English literature and world history.

During her college career, she attended a study abroad program in Florence, Italy, which jumpstarted her love for travel. After graduating from college, she spent four months in Guatemala, working as a second grade teacher at Colegio Boston Bilingüe, a bilingual school outside of the colonial city of Antigua. She was able to spend those months learning Spanish and enjoying the warmth and hospitality of the Guatemalan brethren.

Miss Cannon attended the Ambassador Bible Center in 2007, where she served as editor of the *ABC Times* as well as corepresentative of the ABC chorale. "My time spent at ABC was filled with personal and spiritual growth, made possible by wonderful teachers and students who created an atmosphere that inspired enthusiasm for God's Word and way of life," she said.

In the summer of 2008, Miss Cannon had the opportunity to participate in the United Youth Corps project in Jordan and Israel, where she volunteered at a kindergarten camp in Al Rajif, Jordan, and at the archaeological dig in Megiddo, Israel. "The Middle East has always been on the top of my list of travel destinations. To be able to experience Jordan and Israel with other volunteers from UCG was a great privilege," she said. After the project, she spent another two months in Israel, attend-



Elizabeth Cannon

ing Summer Ulpán at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

On Dec. 1, Miss Cannon began her new post as associate editor of *United News*. "I'm absolutely thrilled to be working with the home office team, and I look forward to giving the *United News* a fresh look while maintaining the integrity of the articles. I am also willing to consider any suggestions for improvement and will do my best to make the *United News* a top UCG publication." **UN**

FORWARD! The Value of Freedom

by Jim Franks



"Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" This was the conclusion to a speech given by Patrick Henry, one of our most famous Ameri-

cans, before the Virginia House of Burgesses on March 23, 1775. When he finished, the entire audience rose to their feet with the cry "To arms; to arms!"

Few sentiments evoke such an emotional response as the concept of freedom. Some people, even some in the Church, know what it means to have their freedom taken away. These are members who are in prison, some for crimes they have committed and others as a result of an injustice. Either way they know what it is like to hear a metal door clang shut each night and to know they cannot leave from their assigned cell.

For the past 30 years I have visited hundreds of individuals in prison. The vast majority I met were guilty of a crime. There was no injustice involved in their conviction, but a poor choice in life or being in the wrong place at

the wrong time. It is my opinion that most people in U.S. prisons were justly convicted, but I also believe that prison does little to rehabilitate these people.

My prison visits began in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1973 and continued through my most recent visit during the Feast of Tabernacles in Davao City, Philippines. In between I visited in prisons from Rhode Island to Massachusetts to Connecticut to Texas to Estonia.

My most recent visit was with a very courageous member in the Philippines, Jed Sy. On Oct. 7, 2008 she was given a life sentence without any evidence of wrongdoing. She is the victim of an aggressive government that desires the eradication of all drugs from the area. This is a wonderful goal, but to remove a young woman's freedom without convincing evidence is a very strong reaction.

My wife, Sharon, and I met for over three hours with Jed in the Davao City jail a few days after her conviction. She is convinced that being in jail has been a positive experience for her. It caused her to evaluate her conversion. This is good, but she is locked away seven days a week, 24 hours a day and forced to live in a communal setting with a dozen other women in the same room.

While pastoring in Texas I developed a Bible study in an effort to give the men and women hope for the future. The study was all about punishment and rehabilitation God's way. In the state of Texas two out of three men who are released from prison will return. Prison often destroys

something in the human psyche that is difficult to restore.

In biblical times, once a crime was committed, the individual was swiftly punished. He was also forced to make restitution. Rehabilitation was a matter of restoration—making amends for your crime—rather than having your freedom taken from you.

As Christians, we cherish the freedom to live a godly life, to overcome sin and to obey the laws of God. Early in His ministry Christ said: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). Prisons are not always made out of bars. Satan has taken the world captive through sin (2 Timothy 2:26). Whether you are in a prison with bars or held captive by Satan, the loss of freedom does profound damage.

When you remove freedom, you damage a person's inner being, and it is very difficult for him to ever recover. I treasure the moments I have spent visiting those locked away in this world's prisons. I also treasure the opportunity to assist those being called by God out of Satan's prison. Even though Patrick Henry was referring to freedom from the tyranny of another nation, I believe that true freedom—proclaiming liberty and setting at liberty those who are oppressed—is worth giving your life for. **UN**

Mr. Franks is Ministerial Services operation manager.

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News From Around the World

New Australian Board Members Ready to Serve

by Bill Eddington

The Constitution of the United Church of God—Australia mandates that the National Council (Board of Directors) is to comprise both elders and lay members of the Church.

Presently, six elders and three lay members serve on the board. The elders are Bill Bradford, Stephen Clark, Bruce Dean, Bill Eddington, Douglas Gray and David Holaday.

From 2006 to 2008 the lay members serving on the board were Salvatore Anastasi, Peter King and Ruth Root.

Board members are elected for two-year terms, with the elections for elders and lay members being held in alternating years.

We have recently completed the lay member election process for 2008. Ruth Root and Salvatore Anastasi did not stand for reelection to the board. Peter King stood for reelection and was successful. He currently serves in the role as secretary to the board.

The two newly elected board members are David King of the Bathurst congregation and Mark Robertson of the Brisbane congregation.

This will be David King's first time as a board member, but Mark had previously served on the board several years ago. We welcome both David and Mark and look



Rachel, Mitchell, Matthew and David King; right, Mark and Ileana Robertson

forward to their making a valuable contribution.

David King and his wife, Rachel, have two sons, Mitchell, 6, and Matthew, 3. He is a senior mining engineer in the underground coal mining industry near Lithgow.

Mark Robertson met his wife, Ileana (Henderson), while attending Ambassador College between 1975 and 1978. They have four children, Josephine, Jemima, Mitchell and Duncan. He has worked as an IT manager, CEO of a software company and cofounder of an Internet business.

Part of the lay member election process is to ask members of our United Church of God congregations to nominate and then ballot to indicate their preferences for lay men or women to serve on the board. As a consequence of this process, six names

were presented in order of preference for the "members of the Corporation" to consider.

The Constitution places responsibility for final selection of the lay



persons standing for election to the board on the "members of the Corporation." This body comprises all Australian elders who have accepted the offer to become "members of the Corporation" plus the lay persons who are the current board members.

The time and thought that members put into the nomination process and the contribution it makes to the effective governance of the United Church of God—Australia is very much valued and appreciated. **UN**

Bill Eddington is chairman of the United Church of God—Australia National Council and a member of the UCGIA Council of Elders. This article first appeared in United News Australia, July-September 2008.

South African Ministry Discusses Manpower Needs

by Tony Levy

The South African ministry and their wives gathered at Badplaas on Nov. 16 for their quarterly ministerial meeting and for their annual two-day conference.

Badplaas is a small resort town that is next to a hot sulphurous spring at the foot of the Ndlumudlumu (which means "Place of Much Thunder" in Swazi) range of hills. The springs bubble out of the ground at 30,000 liters an hour and were known by earlier inhabitants as Emanzana ("Healing Waters").

The quarterly ministerial meeting was dominated by discussions concentrating on manpower needs in Southern Africa

and the identification and training of potential leaders. As elsewhere around the world, the Church in South Africa faces the problem of an aging ministry and new younger blood is urgently required.

The two-day conference was an opportunity for the South African elders and their wives to get together and to share knowledge and experience on how to shepherd God's people more effectively.

Topics included counseling skills, conflict resolution, the government structure and policies of UCGIA and UCG Southern Africa, a book review on persuading people, "Bleating Wolves" (a warning about false ministers who display characteristics of sheep), instructions to elders

from Paul's first letter to Timothy and the awesomeness of the calling to the ministry.

There was also lively discussions on scriptures: the 144,000, "an eye for an eye," "what marriages does God bind and what marriages does He not bind?" and "did the nation of Israel in Palestine literally live in temporary dwellings for the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles?"

All agreed that the two days were well worth the time, as knowledge was increased and the bonds of fellowship were strengthened between the elders and their wives. **UN**

This article first appeared in United News South Africa, November 2008.

Group in Latvia Keeps Feast for First Time

Below is a report from members of a church in Latvia who are learning about the Holy Days and interested in the United Church of God. As reported in the August issue ("Ministers Visit Estonia," page 3), many from this group traveled to Estonia to meet with Vic Kubik and the Estonian members. Their leader, Robert Schultz, kept part of the Feast in Estonia last year and this year attended the UCG site in Germany.

by Antra Kikute and Ziedonis Riders

This year was the first time the Smiltene Baptist Church in Latvia (Eastern Europe)

kept the Feast of Tabernacles. A year ago we as a church started to learn about God's Holy Days. By studying the Bible, we have come to the conclusion that we want to obey God's law and keep His Holy Days.

As God commanded, we gathered on the first day of the Feast. Including children there were 12 people. The meeting started with worship and praise. Since our pastor and his family went to Germany to celebrate the Feast with the United Church of God, brother Ziedonis was authorized to lead the meeting. We learned about the future Kingdom of Christ that is coming. After having discussions about the feasts, we went to have a meal and fellowship.

The schedule of the Last Great Day

meeting was similar to the first day, but the message was even more exciting. There were 10 in attendance.

After the meeting we shared a delicious meal and had a nice afternoon talk. We spoke about God's Holy Days and how they have changed our thinking and lives.

On the Sabbath after the Feast, there were people who made the decision to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day next year for all eight days.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to coming years when we will devoutly celebrate all the feast days and to the coming Kingdom of God, when the whole earth will experience these feasts and their fulfillment. **UN**

International News At a Glance

Family Caught in Middle of Congo Civil War

Akili-Mali Burume Nterabya and his family live in Goma, Congo, on the Rwandan border. Intense fighting has recently broken out again in this region torn frequently by violence. A well-trained rebel army is pushing both Congolese government forces and UN peacekeepers south through the North Kivu Province, toward Goma. The fighting intensified once again Nov. 7 on the outskirts of Goma. Western authorities estimate that 250,000 people have been displaced by the fighting, and up to 150 civilians have been killed.

Rwandan elder Jean-Marie Mundeli and I have not been able to reach Mr. Burume by phone since the fighting broke out. We continue to try to reach him to check on their status. Your prayers are requested for God's protection for the Burume family as they find themselves in the middle of a civil war.

Joel Meeker

Australia Reports Increases; New Accountant Named

UCG—Australia's total income for the fiscal year July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008, was \$1,428,778 (all figures, Australian dollars) compared to total budgeted income of \$1,225,893, reported Treasurer Allan Hambleton in the July-September issue of *United News Australia*. This produced a favorable variance of \$202,885.

Regular tithes and offerings were up \$159,797 over budget. Contributions from coworkers and donors were \$106,446 compared to a budget of \$96,736, giving a favorable variance of \$9,710.

Holy Day offerings totaled \$255,074 compared to a budget of \$239,378, producing a favorable difference of \$15,696. All other income categories were also higher.

Mr. Hambleton stepped down as treasurer and consulting accountant in August. Shaun Carnochan has accepted the position as consulting accountant to the United Church of God—Australia. He is a longtime member of the Australian National Finance Committee, a qualified accountant and a current member of the Audit and Policy Committee.

Beyond Today Breaks Records in Canada

Canadian responses to the *Beyond*

Today program for the week of Oct. 5 to 11 were excellent. Four new records were set.

The program that aired that week was "Revelation's Great False Hope." It was the second time it aired in Canada. The first time it aired, during the week of July 22 to 28, 2007, a total of 45 responses were received. The booklet offered was *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

The most recent airing resulted in a record 94 telephone responses from new viewers and a record 31 responses from viewers already on file (for a total of 125 telephone responses). A further 18 responses came in via the beyond-todaytv.ca Web site, including a record 12 requests from new readers. The total number of responses received was a record 143.

Breaking down the telephone responses further, 102 responses came from viewers of the program on Vision TV and the other 23 responses came from viewers of The Christian Channel.

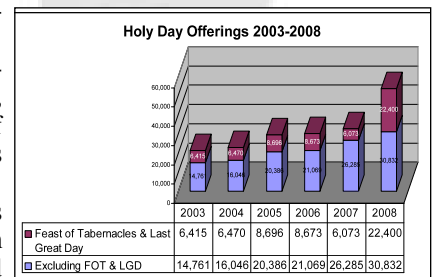
The average number of responses per week is now 38, and the total number of responses received since the program began airing in Canada is 4,789.

Edwin van Pelt

British Isles' Attendance Up 33 Percent in Five Years; Offerings Double

The British Isles office reported that the average attendance for the first five Holy Days has grown by 33 percent over the last five years (from 128 to 170). This represents local growth, not clearly shown when including the last two Holy Days. During the Feast and Last Great Day, a significant number of British members travel to sites outside the United Kingdom, and there are varying numbers of overseas visitors.

The average attendance at the Feast



British Isles Holy Day offerings more than double over five years

of Tabernacles for the first Holy Day and the Last Great Day fluctuates greatly, as the graph shows. For reference, the Feast was held at Grange-over-Sands (2003), Winchester (2004 and 2005), York (2006), Shorefield near Bournemouth (2007) and Stirling, Scotland (2008).

Holy Day offerings for the first five Holy Days have also shown steady growth, more than doubling over the five years (+108 percent).

Jordan Youth Corps Update: Four Lessons From Bus Rides

by **Lena VanAusdle**

We have completed our first two months in Jordan, and it has been an incredible experience thus far. We have seen some of the sights, like our two days in Petra, and we've settled comfortably into our various positions of service.

Obviously leaving our homes and coming to the Middle East meant we would be giving up some things we might have taken for granted back home. One of these things is our cars. We rely solely on public transportation and the buses and cars that our various jobs provide for us.

In the past two months I have ridden in more taxis and taken more buses than I have in the rest of my life combined. This bit of information might not seem like a revelation, or even that interesting, but we're not talking about a bus or taxi ride back home in the United States. (Unless, of course, you've had a driver who took a turn on two wheels instead of four, had to swerve or slam on the brakes to miss a pedestrian or a herd of goats or went down a 45-degree hill at 50 miles an hour—with a hairpin turn at the bottom!)

Since we spend three hours on the bus each day, we have plenty of time to

think, to ponder and to take in the scenery. I'd like to share four of the lessons that I've learned from riding the bus. Most of these have spiritual applications that I found particularly pertinent during the fall Holy Day season.

1. Patience. The bus may be 20 minutes late most days, but it always arrives, and you had better be ready when it does.

We also must be patient because our timeline isn't necessarily God's. In Psalm 40:1 it says, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry." Then in Matthew 25:13 we are reminded to always be ready for Christ's return: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

2. Trust. The driver may be taking a completely different route for no apparent reason, but you always get to your destination, and relatively on time.

Much more so than our driver, God knows where He is going and where He wants you to go. We are reminded of this in Psalm 56:4, "In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?"

3. Faith, blind faith. Blind because, trust me, there are days it's better to



keep your eyes closed and believe you'll make it to your destination intact.

God's people are urged to have faith in Him: "Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful" (2 Chronicles 20:20, New International Version). Hebrews 11, the "faith chapter," reminds us of the

hope that we share with our spiritual forefathers: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

4. Finally, sit in the middle of the bus, thankful that you're not the

driver. The view from the windshield can be unnerving, but the window seats looking over the wadis (valleys) are just fine.

Just as we rely on our driver to navigate the treacherous terrain, we can do the same with God; we don't have to fear anything this world might throw in our direction. **UN**

"ABC Leaders," continued from page 1

tary; Darren Henke, treasurer; Michele "Shelly" Wolfe, social activities coordinator; BJ Foster, service projects coordinator; Tom and Jody Adams, kitchen service coordinators; Michelle Rothwell, ABC message board coordinator; Jeremy Lallier, ABC Times

editor; Jamie Robinson, photographer; Melody Schmidt, music coordinator; Jason "Ace" Cockrell, technical support coordinator; and Jeremy Hess, warehouse coordinator.

Keeping in mind the biblical principle found in Ecclesiastes 9:10—"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might"—the class of 2009 is setting out with high

hopes to achieve the best possible year. **UN**

The author was chosen as ABC Times editor and is an intern for United News.

More Feast of Tabernacles Reports

Colombia

Santa Marta

The 2008 Feast of Tabernacles was held in a tropical setting of sun and surf. Eighty-seven people celebrated the Feast this year at the El Rodadero resort in Santa Marta. Although we've kept the Feast in this area for several years, this year we chose the Palmares Hotel for services and other activities.

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Walker were with us from the Day of Atonement through the first half of the Feast, before traveling to Peru for the second half. We enjoyed having visitors from El Salvador, Chile, Venezuela and Canada. The brethren from Ecuador, who usually join us for the Feast, went to Argentina and Peru this year, mainly due to financial considerations.

As a result of the difficult financial situation we've been in over the past year, we were unable to visit the brethren who live outside of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia and our city of residence. Since we were not able to have personal contact with them, something we try to do at least two or three times per year, the Feast was even more important for all of us. It afforded us the extra blessing of being together after not seeing each other for nearly a year. It was an exceptionally joyous and happy occasion to be able to visit with so many of the brethren who live outside of Bogotá.

We were able to enjoy a number of delightful, positive activities, including a talent night, ladies' afternoon, children's party, family dance, sightseeing tour and an ecology tour to a nearby waterfall and to the mouth of one of Colombia's main rivers.

On the spiritual side, the messages reminded us of the purpose of our calling and the importance of living our lives in a way that will help prepare us to govern with Christ in the Millennium. Also the Feast video *Our Heritage of Faith* was very impressive and moving. Being able to view the whole process we've lived through in the Church over the years was inspiring and instructive.

Being able to keep the Feast in a world that's increasingly difficult,

dangerous and dark, and that tries ever harder to separate us from God and His purpose, is a blessing we must never take lightly. Mr. Armstrong's conclusion in the Feast video made a deep impression, and each one of us left with the determination to return next year to keep the Feast and not allow any root of bitterness to spring up and prevent us from following through!

Eduardo Hernández

United States

Big Sandy, Texas

For the past several years there have been a number of members in the East Texas area unable to travel to the Feast due to age, health or other issues. They have been doing a phone hookup from their assigned site in Kerrville, Texas.

This year they were able to keep it in the new East Texas congregation church hall and a few from the other churches in the circuit were able to join them as well. They were able to get a private cybercast of services from Kerrville on most days and watched videos of services in Kerrville from two years ago on the last two days.

High attendance for those unable to travel to the Feast was 50 on the first Holy Day.

Ken Treybig

Zambia

Lusaka

In 2008, the Feast was extra special because we kept it at our new property 40 kilometers east of Lusaka, the capital city. The truck ride to Lusaka and the bright lights of the city added to the excitement



Lusaka, Zambia

and joy of the whole Feast experience.

The highest attendance was 287 and as usual we stayed in tents. We cooked in two kitchens and served food from two points. This reduced the long serving lines and made it easier for brethren to rejoice.

Two days into the Feast, the two wells at the Feast site ran dry. We were so grateful

to God that the management of LifeNets donated a truck that we used to cart 7,500 liters of water from 10 kilometers away. Without the truck, we would have had no choice but close the Feast site.

Victor Kubik, a member of the Council of Elders, and his wife, Beverly, spent the



last two days of the Feast with us and delivered two informative and inspiring sermons especially on the Last Great

Day. To see senior members of the Church eat our food and fellowship with us was a moving and a living testimony of humility.

The activity highlights were a variety show and the family sports day.

Kambani Banda

Revised 2008 Feast Attendance

Colombia.....	87
United States	
Big Sandy, Texas (satellite site) ...	50
Zambia	287
Revised Total Attendance..	20,349
Shut-ins who received Feast	
tapes from the home office....	756
REVISED TOTAL	21,105



From the Word

Happiness and the Secret Path

■ So few find the way to happiness, it must be a well-hidden secret. But today's your lucky day—the secret will be revealed!

by **Stuart Segall**

"I've got the secret." "Your wish can come true." "Newly discovered cure for well-being." "Finally, the formula revealed."

Haven't we all read these kinds of appeals and wished they were really true for us? Everyone wishes for happiness and many people pretend to have it, yet few seem to truly possess it. Why is happiness so hard to find?

Well, this is your fortunate moment! Pssst...lean in closer. As a mere messenger boy, I can remind you of the real path that leads to it—the fourth chapter of Philip-pians. In reality, Paul knew a lot about this subject. "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done" (Philippians 4:6, New Living Translation). Look up and read verses 7 through 13 as well.

Notice in verse 6, Paul gives three clear instructions for finding lasting happiness and contentment. He says:

- 1) Don't worry about anything.
- 2) Pray about everything.
- 3) Thank God for everything.

Hey! Think for just a moment. What if, today, we took this instruction to heart and put it into practice? What if, today—after doing our part with all our might—we decided not to worry about anything? What if, when we found ourselves worrying, we stopped and handed the situation over to God in prayer?

Now go just a little further. What if we then thanked Him for taking care of the situation? What if we spent most of our mental free time today thinking about what loving care our amazing God takes of us? What would happen then?

Paul says in verse 7, if we begin to live this way we will experience amazing peace—a kind of peace we can't even imagine. It is not of this world, it is out of this world! Peace that makes no earthly sense! This kind of peace is so potent and piercing, it has a protective function on our hearts and minds—which only makes it easier for us to stop worrying and be thankful.

That sounds like a state of happiness to me, and that is why I call it the secret path. It's a secret only because few really find it, but you can. In fact, I am thinking you just did!

In verse 8, Paul elaborates on what to think about instead of our worries—whatever is good, true, honorable, pure, lovely, praiseworthy and right. Many things can fall into these categories, but Christ encompasses them all. This goes far beyond the song lyrics "don't worry, be happy." This is not just positive thinking, which does not last; this is spiritual thinking.

Further down in Philippians 4:10-13, Paul goes on to attest personally to the truth of this three-step process as he writes from a Roman prison. From behind bars Paul says, "I have *learned* how to get along happily whether I have much or little... I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little" (Philippians 4:11-12, NLT).

Did you catch that verb? Paul *learned* how to be happy and content. It didn't just happen once he reached his goals. In fact, he claims his ability to be happy had nothing to



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do with his circumstances, but rather his increased trust in the living God. Paul wasn't exaggerating. He found it, did it and shared it, and is still sharing today.

So, happy contentedness is not something that comes once our waistlines have slimmed (though I would not mind some of that), our wrinkles are erased, our houses are organized, our children are successful, our supervisors have thanked us, our minister has appreciated us or our husbands or wives have doted on us.

Instead, it is learned as we become prayerful (verse 6) and thankful (verse 6), as we practice spiritual

thinking (verse 8), and as we trust totally in Christ (verse 13) even through difficult circumstances.

Alright, it is now time for some final questions—the big ones. Does thankfulness characterize me? Do I think about what is good, lovely, pure and right, or do I think about what is depressing, frustrating, unfair and wrong? May I suggest that we get off the old beaten path we have all been on, and try the proven path, the secret path. The secret's out of the bag—use it, love it, but don't lose it. **UN**

Stuart Segall is pastor of the Crescent City, Eureka and Red Bluff, California, congregations.

"Gospel," continued from page 1

prophecies coming to pass before our eyes. Meanwhile, new technologies are continually increasing our potential to reach more people. We are truly living in a time in which, as God told the prophet Daniel, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4).

Today we live in a global environment totally unlike that of the mid-20th century. Peoples of all nations are dependent upon one another and can communicate almost instantaneously. When the modern work of the Church began, the world population was just over 2 billion. Today it is 6.7 billion and predicted to be 9.5 billion by 2050. These numbers are crushing when we look at our own numbers and resources to go to "all the nations."

Yet God has apparently once again provided the means to do so, just as He did with print, radio, television, air travel, etc. Even though Satan has corrupted all of these media to influence man to evil, Christ has seen to it that they have been powerfully used to preach His gospel to the world. So it is with the Internet.

Readers and Renewals—Making the Most of Our Resources

Some have looked at projected circulation figures for *The Good News* and wondered why we have set the

goal so low. Actually, the number in the Operation Plan is not a goal but an anticipated result of necessary pruning of nonreaders. We have launched an annual renewal (we have been doing renewals every two years) to purge our list of people who are no longer interested in receiving *The Good News*. This is according to plan and intended to cut waste in order to reach a bigger audience with the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

For years we have measured the success of our proclamation efforts primarily by the number of subscribers to our flagship magazine. Many of us have been in the Church a long time and are familiar with the process.

Perhaps we first heard the truth on daily radio broadcasts. Then came the new, exciting marvel of television. TV became the dominant source of news and information. God's work took advantage of this phenomenon and eventually blanketed the United States and many other countries with half-hour programs preaching the gospel and offering free literature. Those who showed interest received a magazine subscription and booklets as requested. The subscription list also grew through print advertisements in large circulation publications.

Because these tools were used to build the Church rapidly for several decades, some think these are still the best ways to preach the gospel to the

world. These means may be effective in some countries for years to come, but in most countries they will soon be eclipsed by other systems such as the Internet combined with television and mobile devices. We must therefore change the way we measure the effectiveness of our proclamation efforts.

As we step out to do more of the work through the Internet, we will measure activity and responses on a variety of Web sites. Many Web users read and respond online and may not be interested in receiving printed magazines and booklets. Their interest and involvement must be measured in other ways. We are already able to track a lot of user information, and this is a rapidly growing feature of the Internet.

You will notice that our articles

These are exciting times to be preaching the gospel. We see end-time prophecies coming to pass before our eyes. Meanwhile, new technologies are continually increasing our potential to reach more people.

frequently encourage readers to "download" our literature. With the world's economy unpredictable, we need to be able to use the farthest-reaching, least-expensive vehicles available. We will be able to reach millions of people online for a fraction of the cost of print or television. Now is the time to prepare for such a reality.

Regarding our current renewal effort, another factor should be understood. We do receive many requests for *The Good News* in responses from all sources, but a large percentage of subscriptions start because we automatically send the magazine along with whatever literature each new person requests. We do not know whether they want it or read it. This renewal is not an effort to reduce the number of *GN* readers, but an effort to reduce waste! If people are not reading the magazine, then it should be going to someone else.

We give each subscriber three opportunities to renew before we stop sending the magazine. With our historic rates of renewal of around 30 percent, it goes without saying that subscriptions will fall. But those who

remain on the list will have shown that they truly are interested and in need of what we provide. People who drop off and later want to contact us again can find us on the Internet.

Not by Might nor by Power

Preaching the gospel in the present environment requires a mixture

of several media vehicles. But there have never been as many opportunities to reach into the farthest regions of the earth. Today we still use magazines, booklets, radio and television, but we are moving most aggressively into the Internet.

Which vehicle we use depends on where the audience is and which methods are effective and affordable. We always try to evaluate both the number who can be reached and the number of responses. Reaching people with the message does not mean they will respond, but we still need to reach them. Only God can call people to His truth, but He has commanded us to spread the gospel to the whole world.

Brethren, the work of preaching the gospel to a world population heading toward 9 billion in the next few decades is a daunting challenge. If God were not in it and if Christ were not the Head of the Church, we would have no hope of doing so.

But with God all things are possible. When He wants it done, it will be done, not by our might or power, but by His Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). Our part is to jump in with both feet to do what we can. We must work as if everything depends on us, but pray as if everything depends on God—because it really does. What a privilege to be part of the most important activity now happening on the face of the earth! Thank God for that privilege. **UN**

Let ALL the Children Come to Us, the Church, Christ's Body

■ What can we do to welcome our special needs children to church?

by **Leanne Holladay**

Christ set a wonderful example by saying, "Let the little children come to Me" (Matthew 19:14). He often reached out to those who were shunned by society. We live in a world that celebrates perfection and urges our children to shine above the rest. What happens when parents in the Church find themselves with a child diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder)?

Fastest-Growing Condition

ASD is a growing epidemic around the world. According to the Autism Society of America, autism is the fastest-growing neurobiological condition in the world. In the United States, one in every 150 children will have ASD, and it is estimated that figure is one in every 90 boys. This is a tragic problem that is affecting a number of members in our own congregations. It is likely you know someone who is challenged with an ASD child.

Families with an ASD child often feel isolated, as they are often told that autism is "untreatable" and that the best option is to prepare their child for a life outside their communities. This is a tragedy for those who love the fellowship of God's people and find themselves unable to attend or shunned because of their child's "bad behavior."

Our Story

As a parent of a child with several disabilities including autism and cerebral palsy, we have experienced many different situations at the Feast and at local church areas, many good, some hurtful. We are most grateful to the amazing love and kindness that the brethren have shown us over the years. Unfortunately, it is not always that way, and occasionally well-meaning people can be hurtful with their assessment without understanding the facts of the situation.

When our son was younger and his autistic behaviors were most severe, it was a very difficult time for our family. It was difficult to even get to church and, once there, we often found ourselves sitting in the lobby because our son was so disruptive. As parents, we barely had time to acknowledge the heartbreak we deep-

ly felt and had to instantly develop an eternal fountain of patience as we dealt with tantrums, odd behaviors and an inability to communicate with our precious son.

We had many years when we felt completely broken and extremely isolated as we searched for ways to help our son. As every long and lonely day ran into another, we found ourselves fighting feelings of hopelessness as our child continued to slip into his own little world, oblivious to anyone or anything around him. And yes, we disciplined our child only to find it bleakly ineffective. We have three other well-behaved children as evidence that our parenting was not the problem.

We felt the only one who truly understood was our Great Father. During our times of most intense stress and devastation, we prayed for relief. God always gave it to us. Not always immediately, but often we eventually found ourselves in "a wide place," where we could simply breathe in peace for a moment. During this time we developed a great love for the God who would guide us through these desolate periods.

Some of you reading this may think this sounds overly dramatic. But those who have been involved with someone who has an autistic child will not. I can assure you it was our reality for a long time. I have spent a great deal of time with other parents of ASD children and found many whose stories are more heartbreaking than ours. We are blessed to have had our Eternal Father supporting us.

There were also many years where we felt supported by members of the Church. However, I am saddened to hear and have occasionally experienced that it's not always the case. Oftentimes Church members have a willing heart, but because autism presents such unique challenges, it is sometimes difficult for brethren to know how to help or support a family with an ASD child. Occasionally, our brothers and sisters in Christ have been judgmental, assuming that it is our parenting (or lack thereof) that caused such a "difficult child." This can add to the loneliness and heartbreak a parent already feels.

Church, Luke 11 and Favorite Hymns

I am happy to say that our son is now a teenager and loves church. He listens intently to the sermon each week. We discovered that he knew where all the scriptures in the Bible

were.

Several years ago, every evening when I went to bed, I found my Bible opened to Luke 11—the Lord's Prayer. I began to find my electronic Bible also turned to that same set of scriptures. One Feast we noticed our son going up and down all the rows of seats and turning everyone's Bible to Luke 11. Although our son has communication difficulties, he certainly was telling us we all needed to pray!

He also has favorite hymns. He literally cheers when the song-leader announces "God Will See Us Through" and "Thank You Lord." This is a young man who from initial appearances is "unaware" of much of his environment. However, we have learned that just the opposite is true.

In fact, what makes ASD children unique is that they are often overly aware of their surroundings, to the point that it is devastatingly painful and overwhelming for them. My son does not like the transition of leaving the house, so on Friday night he will tell us, "I don't like the Sabbath." That might shock some people, but he is not really saying he doesn't like the Sabbath; he is telling us that he is feeling anxiety over the fact that tomorrow he has to get in the car and drive to church. He finds leaving home and riding in the car very stressful, and he starts dreading that process. But once he's there, he bounds into church, and can't wait to start singing.

I share this with you because it is an example of how easily children who suffer with ASD are completely misunderstood because they don't know how to communicate what they are feeling.

How to Help

So, how can you help?

- Educate yourself on the subject. Because of its growing prevalence, there is an abundance of information on the Internet (for example, www.autism-society.org and www.autism.com). Ask the parents of an ASD child to help you understand what they are challenged with as they would likely appreciate the opportunity to share it with a concerned person. Just knowing that there are those who are truly concerned can often alleviate some of the isolation parents experience.

- Help the family be comfortable at church. If sitting in church is difficult for the family, talk to your pastor and sound crew about creating a "family room." Piping sound into the lobby of church or purchasing a portable headset that can receive the



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services (like the kind that are used for the hard of hearing) can be some options. Work with the parents to find a solution that they are comfortable with.

- Don't prejudge without understanding. A child (even a non-ASD child) who has a meltdown may have experienced a series of events that overwhelmed him or her. He or she is usually feeling a need to escape, but is unable to. This is vastly different from a child who erupts because of not getting his or her way.

- Talk to the child each week. One couple in our previous congregation in Seattle, Washington, invited our kids over when my husband and I were out on a date night. They put on the karaoke machine and our son amazingly wanted to join in. After that evening, our son absolutely loved that couple. Each Sabbath before we went to church he would say he wanted to see this couple, and eventually became comfortable enough that he would go over and say hi. We are eternally grateful for these people and the many others who take the time to get to know our son in his own unique way.

- Learn to be comfortable with unusual behavior. Don't worry if the child doesn't look you in the eyes, which is very overwhelming for many ASD children. ASD children are beautiful people who have their own feelings and thoughts and long for relationships just like you and I do. Their inability to connect and their anxiety in dealing with what they perceive as the randomness of people often overwhelms them from having relationships. But studies of adults who have autism have found

that most feel very lonely and isolated and long for friendship. If you can get past the sometimes odd behaviors, such as rocking, hand flapping or the appearance of noncomprehension, you will find an opportunity to be involved with a most remarkable person that can be very rewarding over time.

The road to recovery for people with ASD is a long and strenuous journey, and there are many varieties of how extreme or mild the affects of ASD are. After years and years of research, specialists are only now beginning to understand this devastating disorder. They are uncovering a wealth of information about how our brains work, and just beginning to hold out hope that there could be recovery. But even experts say that the road to any level of progress is long and arduous and demands huge support.

Church attendance adds a particular challenge for our families who have an ASD child or a child with some other type of neurological-based disorder, because we are asking the child to do the opposite of what makes sense to him or her. Families that are struggling with the many disorders that are plaguing our children today desperately need the support of kind and loving people. Please be patient with their difficult circumstances. Your time, understanding and kindness could be the gift they are praying for. Christ said, "Let the little children come to Me." As Christ's Body, we should let *all* the children come to us. **UN**

Leanne Holladay welcomes any parents or members who have questions to contact her at leanneholl@hotmail.com.

"GN Commentary," continued from page 1

will start spending more time on our Web site(s), exploring in-depth what we have to say.

This medium also provides a great opportunity for "viral video marketing." Wikipedia defines "viral video" as "a video clip that gains widespread popularity through the process of Inter-

net sharing, typically through email or Instant messaging, blogs and other media sharing websites." So we are also posting every commentary simultaneously on YouTube, which gives us immediate access to a huge audience and allows people to send it to others, as well as to comment themselves. In addition, we are posting the scripts on our GN site, which allows us to increase the chances of exposure when

people go to search engines looking for keywords on various subjects.

If you haven't seen these commentaries yet, go to either www.gnmagazine.org, where the video screen appears, or to www.YouTube.com. On YouTube, you can do a search for "gn commentary"—all of them will pop up, along with the number of views and comments.

This is still in its fledgling stage

of development, of course. One of our challenges was the question of who could do these. It would require immense creative energy and take hours every day for one person to research, write and deliver these. So ultimately we settled on variety, with eight different ministers here in the office sharing the load. Over time we'll probably narrow that down, but it's a start.

We'll also be working to fine-tune

the approach, content, delivery and impact. Most of the commentaries use video clips from news feeds that Clay Thornton edits into the context.

Nothing like this has been done before in the work of the Church. We are excited about its potential and hope you will be too. **UN**

This originally appeared in the Nov. 25 Ministerial Services Newsletter and Journal.

A Cycle for Christian Growth

■ How can we be spiritually fruitful and avoid falling off the path on our way to the Kingdom? Peter gives us eight traits that are guaranteed to help.

by Preston Buchanan

As Christians, we are called to overcome the adversities set before us and subdue those forces that rage against us. We do this by adopting a lifestyle that is fitting for our calling. We learn about proper Sabbath observances, not just abstaining from work, but coming together as a church and reflecting on God. We keep the Holy Days. We tithe. We repent.

Even so, we must remember that to be a complete Christian, we must live a life of dedication built on practicing *all* Christian traits. For this reason, all aspects of Christianity must be adhered to with diligence for they all go hand in hand.

A Framework for Growth

Peter provides a fascinating framework for tracking spiritual growth. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 the apostle composes a list of eight aspects, or traits, of Christian character. Each aspect is so meaningful that a whole article, if not a whole lifetime, could be dedicated to studying just one aspect. Because all these traits are vitally necessary to Christianity, let's take a closer look at each of these eight aspects of Christian character.

It is important to emphasize that we can't wait until we reach perfection in one trait (be it faith, virtue or any other) before starting to work on another trait. After all, we will not have any aspect of this process perfected until we are made spirit. We can use the growth that we acquire from one trait to support our development of other traits. All aspects of Christianity support the overall development of a Christian. For this reason, once we go through Peter's list of traits, we can go back through this passage and find better ways to apply each trait, and thus continue the ongoing cycle of development.

Like Laying Bricks

One might compare this process to the job of laying bricks. We place one brick after another until reaching the end of the row. Once at the end of the row, we then go back and start the line again, building on top of the first brick in the previous line of bricks that were laid.

In this example, the bricks are the Christian traits that Peter discusses, and our "line of bricks" is eight bricks long. And just like laying bricks, we can go back over the level where we currently find ourselves, always able to add another layer

by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Depending on the individual, one might be very strong in, say, faith, but weak in self-control. The point isn't that you must develop one trait before you start working on another trait, for growing in all ways is important. The point is that the traits complement each other.

As Christians, our current state must not be our resting state. In fact, we have no resting state. Our lifestyle is not one of mere adaptive change, but a commitment to ongoing growth. We do not remain stagnant. We must grow. We *must* improve.

As Christians, we need to analyze where we are in our spiritual growth, and then look for the next step. Even after you apply each step that Peter records, you can go back through the exact same passage and find deeper aspects of application for ongoing growth in every trait that is mentioned.

There is no stopping point in studying Peter's list, for growth in these traits is an ongoing need for all of us.

This passage in 2 Peter is preceded by establishing an understanding of the magnitude of the precious gift God has given us. Peter stokes the fire of zeal in all of us as he reminds the Church that God's divine power grants us all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3, English Standard Version). He then explains that these promises were made so that we could become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (verse 4, ESV). It is because of this promise to become one with God and Christ that we are told to develop these eight traits with all diligence, as mentioned in the first part of verse 5.

Foundation of Faith

Peter explains that our development begins with faith (2 Peter 1:5, ESV). The author of the book of Hebrews makes this same point as he urges the Church to further develop, "not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God" (Hebrews 6:1, ESV).

Faith is one of the most basic, yet essential, aspects of Christianity. It is a foundation of Christianity. Given faith, we must press on for further development, building onto "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, ESV).

Adding Virtuous Action

On top of faith, Peter beckons us to add virtue (2 Peter 1:5). This word *virtue* is also translated as "moral character" in the International Standard Version. Our virtue or moral character is our distinctive quality of conduct concerning right and wrong.

This moral excellence, this virtue,

cannot exist without a living aspect of both virtuous action and virtuous thoughts, as exemplified by the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs (starting in 31:10).

Concerning the foundation of faith, James elaborates on this need to couple faith with taking action. He clearly makes the point that faith is dead and useless if it does not produce righteous action (James 2:15-17). Our moral character, our *virtue*, is comprised of the actions, thoughts and feelings that we demonstrate in accordance with God's law and our faith in His guidance.

Finding Fruitful Knowledge

Knowledge is the next aspect of Christianity in Peter's list. There are many aspects of knowledge, and God would want us to grow in all forms of godly knowledge and wisdom, but the reference to knowledge here may be more specific.

For example, Peter is addressing Church members who already know who Jesus Christ and the Father are (verse 2). In the context of this passage, Peter is listing "knowledge" in a set of traits that "keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful" (2 Peter 1:8). So then, this is not just an understanding of mere facts, but an understanding that will make us effective and fruitful Christians. The knowledge that we seek is a knowledge that improves our Christianity.

Striving for Self-Control

Once we acquire knowledge that guides our development of Christian fruits, we can continue to develop ourselves by obtaining self-control. When we have the knowledge about *how* to be an effective and fruitful Christian, the next task is *taking the action* that will make us effective and fruitful. This is done by having dominion over both thoughts and actions.

One of the greatest examples of exercising self-control is the discipline with which an athlete approaches his or her sport. Athletes strive not only to acquire the knowledge of how to train for their sport, but also diligently seek to discipline themselves in performance. Paul used this allusion when he said, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Corinthians 9:25, ESV).

According to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, the Greek word used here, translated as "self-control," has a specific application to athletes, "who in preparing themselves for the games abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence."

The point to draw from this is that the athletes had complete dominion and control over their bodies for the purpose of perfecting performance. For that reason, they sacrificed

pleasurable indulgences, esteeming the prize to be worth far more. We Christians, too, must have complete dominion and control over our bodies for the purpose of perfecting our Christian performance, valuing the Kingdom of God and our relationship with God above all else.

Once Is Not Enough

The next step is developing perseverance or endurance. Being able to control ourselves in a situation once is not good enough. We must endure, working on always having control over ourselves. We must get rid of that which inhibits our Christian performance, thus "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Practicing Pure, Godly Devotion

The placement of the next trait, godliness, might seem strange. One would think that godliness would be the last trait that would be acquired. However, this trait, translated "godliness," is perfectly placed if the original Greek word is considered. This Greek word *eusebeia* means piety or being devout and well-pleasing to God.

Piety and devotion seem very fitting traits to follow perseverance, for our godly perseverance should, over time, lead to a development of pure godly devotion in all aspects of life.

The greatest example of a devoted life was the very life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was so devoted that He "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8, ESV). It is His example that we look to, and that each of us strives to mirror as we become willing to sacrifice all we have for God, seeing that every-

As Christians, our current state must not be our resting state. In fact, we have no resting state. Our lifestyle is not one of mere adaptive change, but a commitment to ongoing growth. We do not remain stagnant. We must grow. We must improve.

thing in existence is already His.

A Unifying Trait

The traits up to this point have been geared toward the development of the individual. However, God does not desire us to be divided, but He desires us to be a unified body (Romans 12:15). God's Church is to be a united body of devoted and humble servants. For us to be unified, we truly require these last two characteristics in Peter's epistle.

The next of these traits is brotherly love. One cannot claim Christianity and fail to love his or her fellow Christians. No matter how dedicated one is to following morality, Christianity is not complete if one rejects outgoing concern and care for any member of the Body of Christ—or anyone else.

Paul encourages us to do nothing out of "selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than [yourself]" (Philippians 2:3). As ambassadors of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), we must set the example in all ways, including our treatment of our fellow human beings.

The Defining Principle: Love

The last trait that Peter mentions is the pinnacle of Christianity. It is the pinnacle because it is only truly present when all other traits are in place and adhered to. It is the manifestation of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness/piety and brotherly affection all at once and continuously. It is an empowering and devotional love.

The Greek word for this form of love, *agape*, is used in many scriptures. It is the love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18). It is the love by which God calls us His children (1 John 3:1). It is the love that defines God and that He showed by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

It is the love that God had for Jesus Christ and commanded that we have for each other (John 15:9-12). Jesus Christ characterized man's ultimate display of this love, saying, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, ESV). This sobering and inspiring command directs us to completely attain the mind-set of God. God is defined by this love, and we must grow and become defined by this love as well.

As we go through the traits that Peter lays out, treating each trait as a brick to lay one by one, we come to realize the need to go back to faith, our first brick, and start another row, beginning the process anew. We all

fall short, and we all make mistakes along the way. However, every time we go through this process that Peter outlines, we have the opportunity to develop a little more of the intense love that God has.

One inspiring aspect of God's love is this: Although we may trip and stagger, as long as we pick ourselves up, we will "never stumble or fall away" (2 Peter 1:10, New Living Translation). We will continually learn more and more about God's love for us and His patience and mercy as He involves Himself directly and continually in our mission to grow. Let us continue to grow and develop the very character of God within us. **UN**

Preston Buchanan is a college student and a member in the East Texas congregation.

Treasure Digest

How Would You Answer?

In 1 Peter 3:15 the apostle Peter encourages us to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (King James Version). This can be a challenging aspect of our Christian calling, but it is a part that we cannot neglect. I am reminded of this on a regular basis, but more so during camp. I was asked to assist in one of the question-and-answer sessions, and here are some of the questions the teens asked:

- How do you know when you’re ready for baptism? I feel as though I’ll never be worthy enough.
 - I feel really nervous when I pray out loud for meals and stuff. I asked my family if I could keep my prayers to myself for a while, and they said, “There is nothing wrong with praying out loud, so, no, you can’t.” I feel frustrated about this. What should I do?
 - When someone who is in the Church and has not yet been baptized commits suicide, what happens to them when Christ returns? Will they be with us for eternity or will they never be with us ever again?
 - Is there a proper form for praying?
 - When Christ says He has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, what specifically is He referring to?
 - In 2 Corinthians 11:8, Paul says that he “robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.” If the tithe is holy, was Paul sinning by not collecting the tithe? Were the Corinthian brethren also sinning?
- How would you answer these questions? Many times we think of being prepared to answer people in the world around us, but what about being able to answer properly those among us who have questions—especially our youth? If they see that we can’t give a good, succinct answer, then why

should they bother to listen to us about the rest of what we say we believe?

In Deuteronomy 6:7 Moses recorded God’s directive for us to teach our children: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Much of this involves creating the moments when our children are comfortable listening to us and asking us questions. This is a serious responsibility that God gives to every parent.

So, how would you answer the above questions?

Dan Dowd

Pastor of the Milwaukee, Oshkosh and Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, congregations

The Water of Life

Are you thirsty right now? If not, you probably don’t think much about water. But many who live in drought-stricken areas have seen how, with-

out water, the grass and plants suffer and the crops are reduced. When something goes wrong with the water supply—like when they told the students in our school district not to drink from the drinking fountains and told residents to boil our water at home—it makes us consider the water we so often take for granted.

For many it’s a life-or-death issue. *Reuters* magazine said this about the world’s water crisis:

“Three billion people could be facing little or no access to clean water by the year 2025, unless the world takes urgent action, says the UN. Without change, it is easy to imagine a future where nations go to war over scarce supplies and millions literally die of thirst” (July 2002 cover story).

We live in a desperately thirsty world, not only thirsty for clean, fresh water, but especially for the spiritually pure water of life. God uses physical thirst as a type of the much-more-important spiritual thirst that He promises to satisfy.



Why are we in this mess? The simple answer is that man has rejected God and tried to replace Him and His life-giving ways with things that don’t satisfy. Jeremiah records God’s words about where man has gone astray. Jeremiah 2:13 says: “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

Man comes up with his own spiritual paths, and his own ways of living, that don’t satisfy—that leave us dying of thirst. In the physical realm we make short-sighted choices that end up befouling and polluting our waters. Ignorance and greed have contributed to this world’s water crisis, and now we worry that hate-filled individuals will terrorize us by attacking our water systems.

In the spiritual realm, our world is even more ignorant of the effect of spiritual pollution. When man rejects the Instruction Manual, he rejects the test kit that allows us to recognize the pure spiritual water of life. God’s test kit also allows us to recognize the spiritual pollution of false doctrines, polluted holiday customs and practices, and wrong ways of thinking that leave us with sorrow and tears—and dying of spiritual thirst.

The Bible shows the end result of all the degrading and polluted ways of man. Before the end of man’s civilization Revelation records a number of devastating plagues that will help bring man to his senses. Many of these plagues will affect the water. Revelation 8:10-11 talks about a third of the waters becoming bitter. Revelation 16:4 tells of rivers and fountains of water turning to blood. Revelation 11:6 explains that the two witnesses will have the power to stop the rain and turn water to blood.

Then after all this devastation God will intervene to save our thirsty and devastated earth. Revelation 7:16-17 gives a wonderful promise to the great innumerable multitude that comes out of the Great Tribulation: “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

What a wonderful time is in store beyond this age! During the Feast you probably read one of my favor-

ite millennial scriptures in Isaiah 35:1 and verses 6-7. There it talks about the desert blossoming as the rose and thirsty lands becoming springs of water.

This physical healing and blessing of water in abundance is a shadow of something far greater—spiritual rivers of living water (John 7:37-39).

This is an incredible promise of the future, but it is also something we can practice now! Christ said we could have streams of living water flowing out from us now that Christ has been glorified. Let’s drink in of the spiritual water of life from God’s Word and through His Spirit, and let it flow out from us. And let’s not take water, whether physical or spiritual, for granted. Let’s thank God for the water of life He provides!

Mike Bennett

Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation

Can We Be “Debbie Downers” in God’s Church?

A few years ago, *Saturday Night Live* had a skit-series featuring a character called “Debbie Downer.” Every time she and her jovial friends had a get-together, the high spirits of the energetic throng would be quickly diminished by Debbie’s negative interjection, sending the conversation into a spiraling nosedive and, eventually, awkward silence. It was funny to watch but, sadly, too true in reality at times.

What about us? What do we talk about when we’re together on the Sabbath? What do we involve ourselves with and talk about during the week? Would we be described as positive and uplifting, or would we fit more into the “Debbie Downer” category?

There are several scriptures that speak of “the upright”; those who strive to follow God and do His will (Proverbs 15:8). Isn’t it interesting that even the very word “upright” illustrates the nature and attitude of these individuals as being “up”? God is a happy God (1 Timothy 1:11, Strong’s #3107 “blessed, happy”) and He desires His people to be pure and positive thinkers (Philippians 4:8) and to have truthful speech that is interesting and flavorful (Colossians 4:6).

We are to rid ourselves of every sort of negativity that can corrupt our speech and ourselves (Colossians

Turning the Hearts . . . Discover Your Child’s Talents

“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

We have all believed this proverb and sought to rear our children in God’s way. However, perhaps we have neglected to help them discover their talents that they may share with others.

We all have gifts or talents (Matthew 25:15; Romans 12:6). Some call them abilities or natural gifts. Some athletes are referred to as naturals or gifted. Some musicians are certainly gifted—some from very young ages. As parents, we have the great opportunity to help our children discover and develop their talents.

Most parents do not know all the gifts their children have unless they give their children opportunity to find those gifts or talents. By exposing our children to a variety of activities, we may discover where their individual talents lie. Music, sports, art, writing and mechanics are all good opportunities for children to discover what they are good at doing.

We exposed our children to music and sports. The school system helped with art and writing. My wife taught our daughters the accordion. They dutifully took lessons and did all right, but they did not “take” to the accordion. They liked the flute and clarinet much better. Neither became musicians, but they learned to read music and to have an appreciation for music.

When we give our children opportunities to learn teamwork through sports, it helps them with teamwork in life. That is always helpful for success in business and the family.

One thing we must be careful not to do is try to make our children become what we always wanted to be. Perhaps you wanted to be a dancer. So, you dutifully prod your daughter to become a dancer. She complies, but she does not like it. We may unknowingly limit our children’s development in other aspects that would be more of a “fit” for them.

As parents, let’s help our children discover their talents or gifts so that they may grow up as confident, well-rounded individuals. Then they may be able to use those talents to fulfill their potential and share them with their family, their community and their Church. Through this process, they will be able to use whatever talents they develop to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Gary E. Antion



Children’s Corner Famous Animals of the Bible

Write the names of the animals from the New King James Version on the blank lines. Then unscramble the letters in boxes to complete the scripture at the bottom.



□ □ □ □ (Numbers 22:28)

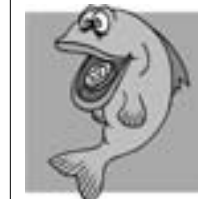
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
(Genesis 3:1)



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
(Daniel 6:22)



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
(Matthew 10:29)



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
(Matthew 17:27)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
(Leviticus 16:7)



“□ □ M O M B E R □ □ □ Y O U R C O □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □”
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

3:8) for, as Christ warns us, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; moreover, we will have to give an account for, and even be judged by, the words we utter (Matthew 12:34-37).

Of course, that doesn't mean we should feign a happy-go-lucky attitude for outward appearances either. There are moments in every one of our lives where trials and challenges should first be cast upon God in fervent prayer (1 Peter 5:7) and then shared with one another for edification and encouragement (Galatians 6:2).

By staying close to the One who has our very best interests at heart, we can better ride the waves of difficulty and receive the confidence and courage only God can provide to press on and overcome the challenges we face. We can develop a more positive outlook because, through Jesus Christ, our burden is truly light (Matthew 11:30). We can be able to share with one another all of the ways God is intervening, providing us strength, building our faith and giving us reasons to rejoice in Him!

"Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:11).

Rebekah Leyden

Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation

The Art of Appreciation—The Bucket Fillers!

A while back I was a bit down at work and asked God privately to encourage me. Wow, did He answer that prayer quickly! Later on, that very day, I was handed a beautiful gift bag with several nice gifts in it: a couple of little tea bags, some cookies, a nice little planner and a handmade bookmark and card. On the front of this pretty gift bag was the scripture 1 Corinthians 15:58. This gift lifted my spirits.

We all want to be appreciated, no matter where we work or what we do in life. Aside from the paycheck that most of us receive, we all want to know that our contribution in life is appreciated. Our buckets need to be filled emotionally.

Recently I read the book *How Full Is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Don Clifford. The book is based on the theory that we all have invisible emotional buckets that need to be filled. Our buckets are constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it's empty, we feel awful.

Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to fill other people's buckets—by saying or doing things to increase their positive emotions—we also fill our own bucket. But when we use that dipper to dip from others' buckets—by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions—we diminish ourselves.

Like the cup that "runneth over," a full bucket helps us have a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop in that bucket makes us stronger and more optimistic. But an empty bucket can poison our outlook, sap our energy and undermine our will. (Of course, with power from God's Spirit, we can be positive even if we receive little encouragement from others.)

The book goes on to talk about why people leave their jobs. The number one reason is they don't feel appreciated. The authors say 65 percent of Americans receive no recognition at all on their jobs! That is astounding and sad.

So we face a choice every moment of every day: We can fill one another's buckets, or we can dip from them. It's an important choice—one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health and happiness.

I thought of this book when I was given the gift bag. The scripture on the bag also reminded me of how much God is a bucket filler too! "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of

the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58, New International Version).

We all need to practice filling one another's buckets with appreciation and kindness, no matter where we work or what we do or who we come in contact with. It makes a huge difference for others, as well as for ourselves.

Janet Treadway

Cincinnati, Ohio, North congregation

Let's Run the Race Together

Recently while reading about individuals who participate in rigorous triathlons, I was struck at the intense training involved for each segment of their race. Triathlons can include running, cycling and swimming. Triathletes train for years for each segment of the race to make sure they can endure the hardships involved before reaching the finish line.

We who are striving to serve God in these trying times are also running a race, and each day is our spiritual training ground. As individuals running a triathlon will have several areas in which to compete, we also have many areas in which to grow and overcome. Our race will be uphill and difficult at times, and then we may find a nice green valley to coast in for a certain period. Some of the hills before us are so steep we don't know if we can climb them, but God promises to never leave us or forsake us. Our daily lives involve many obstacles and Satan always covers the road with many stumbling blocks to get us off course.

God's servants are running a worldwide spiritual triathlon. We face many different and difficult hurdles to conquer on our spiritual path. We may stumble and fall, or even drop out of the race for a time, but as others of like faith reach out hands to help us get up and get back in the race, we must get up and go again.

Just as a physical family shares a family bloodline and DNA, our spiritual family shares a spiritual connection through God's Holy Spirit. As we read about trials our members are experiencing, we should reach out to help in any way possible, but especially in raising prayers to our Heavenly Father for His help and intervention. Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother and the Captain of our salvation, is our Intercessor and He goes before the Father on our behalf. We can also encourage our spiritual family members by sending cards and letters to let them know they are important to us and that we are raising prayers for them before our God. We can visit the sick, send flowers or take food for them and their family.

As we are directed in God's Word, let us run the race (Hebrews 12:1-2), striving always to keep our eyes open, our hearts full of love and compassion and our hands ready to reach out to help our spiritual family members as we run this final lap together. God will see us through!

Ella Mae Tyrkalo

Houston, Texas, South congregation

A Time of Joy!

As we learn more of God's truth, it is very exciting to see what lies ahead! Our physical minds cannot fully appreciate God's awesome plan, yet how wonderful the truth is even with our limited understanding.

Throughout the year, God's amazing plan continues to be revealed to us through His seven annual festivals. God is looking forward to the fulfillment of these Holy Days with great anticipation!

What joy our Father must have as we draw closer to the return of Jesus Christ. God began to plan the details for increasing His family before the

foundation of the earth. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:9 that God has planned our future "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."

At the first resurrection, our Father's joy will be immense because this is the first time in all eternity that there will be more than two members in the God family! Think of how we, as physical parents, are very happy to see the birth of our children. God grants us these physical experiences to help us better understand His plan and to realize His excitement of adding to His spiritual family.

All of us look forward to becoming the sons and daughters of God, but have we considered the great joy that God will experience at our birth? Just think, based on how we live our lives, we all have a part in bringing joy to our Heavenly Father!

Paul shows us that humanity does not understand God's plan. He writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." In verse 10, Paul explains that God has revealed this spiritual knowledge to those who have His Holy Spirit. As God's children, our increased understanding of His truth gives us reason to be zealous toward His amazing plan.

We all need to continue to bring joy to our Father. We accomplish this by listening carefully to God's words, daily applying what we hear and allowing God through His Spirit to build His holy, righteous character within us.

Doug Wendt

Orlando, Florida, congregation

The Message of "Taps"

In July 1862 after the Seven Days' Battle at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, resulting in the loss of 600 of his troops, General Daniel Butterfield also lay wounded.

He felt that the bugle call "Tattoo" or "Lights Out," which was then used to tell the soldiers to lie down to rest, was not right for that purpose. He called his bugler, Oliver W. Norton, and working together they revised the call to what is today known as "Taps." This haunting melody was quickly picked up by other units and eventually was made an official call by the military. Both the northern and southern armies used it.

In Boy Scout camps it is used for lights out. And it is still used by the U.S. military to signal

the end of the day. But most of all we may associate this mournful call with military funerals. It was first used for this purpose soon after it was composed, and continues to the present. It brings a note of sadness whenever it is played. But did you know it really can be thought of as a song of joy, peace and promise?

Many versions of words have been written to the music. One I particularly like is:

"Day is done, gone the sun,
"From the lakes, from the hills, from the sky.
"All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.
"Fading light, dims the sight,
"And a star gems the night gleaming bright.



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"From afar, drawing nigh, falls the night.
"Thanks and praise for our days
"Neath the sun, neath the stars, neath the sky.
"As we go, this we know, *God is nigh.*"

Theses words show contentment and peace and remind us God is always near to us. Jesus tells us in Hebrews 13:5 (last part): "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Verse 6 continues: "So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

And "Taps" says, "All is well, safely rest, *God is nigh!*"

Newton Baker

Fort Worth, Texas, congregation

Share Your Treasures!

Do you have any short items of biblical wisdom, humor or practical information that you would like to share? Please send them to your local pastor and ask him to forward them to *United News* at the home office. Guidelines available on request (UN@ucg.org).

The Lighter Side...

by Merle Slagle





Local Church Updates

Reluctant Runner Sets Record

Marian Ecker Sargent, during her junior and senior years in Ambassador



Marian Sargent, exhausted but victorious in Kansas Senior Games

College, was named the most outstanding female athlete for track and field. But she hadn't competed for personal praise. She just wanted to help her class gain more points. Her heart was never into training and competing. She stopped competing after she married.

After years of keeping fit only in order to maintain health, it must have been difficult to just keep saying "no" when her husband and son kept urging her to compete in the Senior Olympics. But "no" it was...for 13 years. Nevertheless, the persistence of those two favorite dudes in her life was just too much. She finally agreed to meet the test.

With expectations so high, it wouldn't be easy. Not only was she to run the 100 and 200 meters, but also the 400 meters, a race that for a sprinter is the toughest of all and one that she had never entered. On top of this was her husband's challenge to break the 400-meter state record in the 25-year history of the Kansas State Senior Games.

All she had to do was enter a competition that had no value to her, train to the point of pain for several weeks, exhaust herself in less than three hours of competing and expect to break the state record, running faster than any woman had run in 25 years, in a race she had never run before.

But the character Marian had developed for years in every other aspect of her life grabbed the challenge, shook it by the tail, dashed it to the earth and ground it to powder—overcoming to victory. She would shun justifications by her trainer as to why, on occasion, not to run.

Two very hard workouts were required every week in order for her brain to communicate the need for her body to be prepared for this type of a race. The body doesn't comply for a full 19 days. But after nine weeks of nonstop training, running sets of very hard 200-meter repeats (some uphill) with only one minute rest between each and running an all-out 400 meter to complete anaerobic exhaustion and rubber legs each week, she was ready.

Her discipline paid off! In her first race, Marian won first place in the 100 meters and in her third race placed first in the 200 meters.

The race she had never run? She broke the state record in the 400 meters by over six seconds, running 1:29.92, leaving the second-place finisher a whopping 40 seconds behind.

I did manage to pull the following comment from my lovely wife: "Overcoming our human nature and Satan's world is much more difficult than training for and running a physical race."

Greg Sargent

Kansas City Hosts Singles' Weekend

Nearly 40 singles from 19 states converged in Kansas City, Missouri, over Labor Day weekend for a "Transformation Training" themed event. The group contained about an even split of men and women with ages ranging from 22 to 59.



Photo of the singles' weekend group taken at the Sargents' home Aug. 31

Activities kicked off Friday night, Aug. 29, with a delicious gourmet pizza reception, and guests took part in a "secret scripture" drawing. Each person drew half of a scripture and then had to find the single with the other part of the verse. Once they found their secret scripture buddy, they had to find out three things about him or her that would later be revealed to everyone on the final night.

Saturday activities included seminars, dinner, dancing and karaoke at an Irish pub. On Sunday, the singles toured a national World War I museum, a memorial garden and an art gallery.

Sunday afternoon concluded with a barbecue picnic at the home of Greg and Marian Sargent, pastor of the Kansas City congregation. There the singles also participated in volleyball, badminton, card games and even private dance lessons!

The event concluded Monday, Sept. 1, with a tour of the Arabia Steamboat Museum where the remaining singles got to see the largest collection of pre-Civil War artifacts. One of the singles said, "The event's atmosphere was like a mini Feast of Tabernacles!"

You can view more than 250 photos posted on the event Web site: http://kc2008transformation.com/Event_photos.html.

Ruben Gusman

Congratulations, High School Graduate

Graduate: Jedd Cole-La Ravia

Parents: Dave and Laura La Ravia of Tucson, Arizona, and Ricki Cole of Maui, Hawaii

Congregation: Tucson, Arizona



Jedd Cole-La Ravia

School Accomplishments: During middle and junior high school, Jedd participated actively in the local home school support group while living in Northwest Arkansas. He wrote articles and edited the group's newsletter. Jedd also took art lessons for several years, and during high school he taught himself to play piano proficiently in less than a year. During his senior year, he worked

in the family courier business, while studying to complete high school.

Church Activities/Hobbies/Interests/etc.: Jedd has always been very active in serving at church, most often assisting with the audio/sound crew. He serves in the area of special music by playing piano and performing vocal solos. He has attended United Youth Camps every year since he was 12 at Pinecrest in Missouri, Carter in Texas and Hye Sierra in California. Jedd enjoys drawing, sketching, playing piano, writing and learning languages (Spanish and Japanese). He is also an avid *Star Wars* fan and is currently writing an original sci-fi novel, with characters based on his brothers and sisters.

Plans After Graduation: Jedd plans to move to Dallas, Texas, at the beginning of December to take advantage of a job opportunity. He will return to Tucson to start 2009 fall classes in pursuit of a degree in Web design.

Favorite Quote: "Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try"—Yoda.

Favorite Scripture: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39).

Local Church Updates: If your congregation's news and events are rarely covered in *United News*, why not check with your pastor and write something for him to send in? We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photographs with captions. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Include the author's and photographer's names and your phone number. Please double-check the spelling of names. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give the material to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

Announcements

Births

Samuel and Sondra (Wilhelm) Hines of the Denver, Colorado, con-



Wesely Ray Hines

gregation are pleased to announce their firstborn son. Wesely Ray Hines was born Oct. 16, 2008. He weighed 7 pounds 1 ounce and was 20½ inches long. Proud grandmas are Jackie Wilhelm (Denver) and Lorna Hines (Post, Texas). What a gift from God!

Anniversaries

Dan and Esther Salcedo were honored by the Garden Grove, California, congregation during the weekly coffee social, after the Sabbath service on Oct. 25, 2008. The special occasion was in recognition of their 50th wedding anniversary. A book of many positive comments and congratulations by brethren and friends



Esther and Dan Salcedo

was presented to them, and a beautiful and delicious cake was quickly eaten by those in attendance to help mark the occasion.

Dan and Esther were married in Pasadena, California, on Oct. 25, 1958, and have been members of the Church of God since 1964. They

have been blessed with four children and 12 grandchildren.

In recognition of their 50th anniversary, this past July most of the Salcedo family members were able to spend several days of fun and fellowship together in a large mountain lodge near Lake Arrowhead, California. Dan is an elder in the Garden Grove congregation, and he and Esther have lived in Southern California all of their 50 years of marriage.

Obituaries

Louise Westberry Dorsey, 83, of Chesapeake, West Virginia, died Oct. 30, 2008, at home. She was a member of God's Church in Charles-

ton for over 40 years. She was preceded in death by her husband, also a member, James Carl Dorsey Sr., on March 18, 1997.

Surviving are sons James C. Dorsey Jr. and wife, Joy; Dean Dorsey Sr. and wife, Betty; Roger Dorsey and wife, Pam; Arnold Dorsey and wife, Cheri (both of whom are members in the Charleston congregation); Randy Dorsey; David Dorsey and wife, Joyce; Robert Dorsey and wife, Ali; daughter, Jo Rogers, and husband, Bruce; 25 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

Louise was able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles this past year in Jekyll Island.

She was an inspiration and joy to her home congregation. Every week members would have a potluck meal

following services, and she always made it a point to bring food. Everyone loved her cooking. In the last year or so, she was suffering from loss of memory, but she never forgot the truth of why she was here and of her future in the Kingdom of God. The Charleston congregation will miss her. Her pastor, John Foster, conducted the funeral service.

Merrilyn Lucille Murray, 58, of Florence, South Carolina, died Oct. 22, 2008, in her residence after a long illness. She was a member of the Florence, South Carolina, United Church of God congregation and was baptized on Dec. 14, 1984, by Larry Greider. She was a mother of two daughters, the late Connie Miles and Amy Connell. She had two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

She was the daughter of Mrs. Frances Broad of the Florence congregation and the late Roy Lee Murray. Before her illness, she loved to help in the kitchen with church potluck dinners. She was a retired certified nurse's assistant. She grew up in Florence County and lived there all her life.

A graveside service was conducted on Oct. 25 by her minister Don Waterhouse and was well attended by many Church members, friends and neighbors.

Violet Livaudais Sanders, age 75, died Oct. 15, 2008, at her home in



Violet Livaudais Sanders

Slidell, Louisiana, after a long bout with pulmonary fibrosis. She is survived by her loving husband of 58 years, Nathan G. Sanders; two sons, Wayne Sanders (Elsie) and Glen Sanders; a daughter, Rhonda Korkut (Zeki); eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; two sisters, Aline Curtis and Loy Dimoff; and a brother, R.C. Livaudais. She has 20 relatives attending UCG alone!

Violet served diligently as a youth Bible class instructor and Sabbath service set-up/take-down scheduler for many years. She and her husband hosted the Louisiana-Mississippi congregations' annual spring picnic on the beautiful grounds of their property. She loved gardening, teaching young people, studying God's Word and her family. An outdoor memorial service was conducted by Andy Burnett, pastor of the New Orleans, Louisiana, congregation on the grounds of their property.

Vola E. Boaz, 81, of Valparaiso, Indiana (formerly of Newport News,

Virginia), died on Sept. 9, 2008, with her son, Bob; daughter, Becky; and pastor, Vernon Hargrove, at her side.

Mrs. Boaz was a longtime member and deaconess. She came into the Church in Detroit, Michigan, in 1964.

In 1971 she moved to Pasadena, California, to work for the Church. She eventually became a secretary for then Church attorney Ralph Helge and associates. Mr. Helge stated that he "highly valued Mrs. Boaz as



Vola E. Boaz

a person of loyalty, and also her secretarial traits of accuracy, organization and reliability."

She retired from the work in 1995 and moved to Virginia to be closer to her grandsons. In 2006 she and her son, Bob, moved to Valparaiso, where her daughter, Becky, and her family now live.

Mrs. Boaz loved to camp and socialize with the young brethren. She loved to entertain and was hostess to many a dinner party and pizza and Bible studies while Becky was in college. She also played the piano, often accompanying for the hymns and special music. She was a true pillar in the Church, strongly committed to her beliefs.

Mrs. Boaz is survived by her son, Bob; her daughter, Becky (Paul) Zonghetti; and her grandsons, William and Anthony Zonghetti.

A family graveside service was officiated by Flint, Michigan, elder Malcolm Murray on Sept. 13 at Deepdale Cemetery in Lansing, Michigan. Those wishing to share a memory may do so via e-mail at BeckyBoZo@yahoo.com.

Elizabeth "Bessie" B. Pitre, age 66, a native of Grand Caillou, Louisiana, and resident of Houma, Loui-



Elizabeth "Bessie" B. Pitre

siana, died Sept. 14, 2008, after suffering a massive heart attack.

She is survived by her husband of 51 years, Julius Pitre, a member of

the New Orleans, Louisiana, congregation; one son, Patrick Liner; two daughters, Jerylyn Bergeron (Wade) and Patricia Pitre; one brother, Horace Bourg; one sister, Vivian Miller; and four grandchildren, Talia Bergeron, Shawn Matherne, Felicia Adams and Kristofer Adams.

Elizabeth set up the flower arrangements weekly for Sabbath services. She had a great sense of humor and loved being with the brethren.

The funeral service was conducted by Andy Burnett, pastor of the New Orleans congregation.

Gary Ryan Dunn, 66, of Woodbine, Georgia, died Oct. 24, 2008, at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

He was born June 23, 1942, in Anderson, South Carolina, to the late Talford and Jennie Dunn. He



Gary Ryan Dunn

had resided in Camden County since 1986. Gary was a retired electrician/

machinist and a member of the United Church of God in Jacksonville.

Survivors include his wife, Clara; daughters, Rebekah Dunn and Clarissa (Harley) Brock; brothers and sisters, Roderick Dunn, Jason Dunn, Betty Jo Dickson and Lou Esther Rainey; two grandchildren, Charlotte Dunn and Harley Brock II; and several nieces and nephews. His sister Fredda Dean Rider preceded him in death.

Services were held Nov. 2 at Colesburg Cemetery in Woodbine, with Roy Demarest, pastor of the Jacksonville congregation, officiating.

Sandra Lynn Taber, 59, of Kirtland, New Mexico, died June 20, 2008, at her home with family by her side. She was born July 20, 1948, the daughter of Charles and Gladys Bassett, in Greenville, Kentucky. She was a beloved daughter, wife, mother and grandmother.

Sandra graduated from Drakesboro, Kentucky, High School in 1966 and received an associate's degree from Western Kentucky University in 1968; a bachelor's degree from Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, in 1971; and a master's degree in education guidance counseling from the University of Texas, El Paso, in 1993. She was a school counselor for schools in Texas and Arizona. She retired from Palm Croft Elementary School in Yuma, Arizona, as a counselor in June 2005.

Sandra enjoyed shopping for antiques and spending time with

family and friends, especially her grandchildren, Liam and Brigid.

Sandra is survived by her husband of 37 years, Eugene D. Taber; parents, Charles and Gladys Bassett; daughter, Alicia (Patrick) O'Brien; son, Scott J. Taber; and grandchildren, Liam and Brigid O'Brien.



Sandra Lynn Taber

Memorial services were held at the United Church of God in San Diego, California, on June 28, 2008, with pastor Robin Webber officiating.

Announcements: Members are welcome to submit announcements of the births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.) and obituaries in their families. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Most items are 50 to 100 words and should not exceed 250 words. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give them to your local pastor** to forward to *UnitedNews*.

Tribute: John Bald

Longtime pastor John Bald died of heart failure Aug. 29, 2008, at age 73. Mr. Bald retired in 2002 after over 44 years of service in the ministry, and his death is a significant loss to the Church. As an active minister, Mr. Bald pastored in 20 different congregations, and he assisted in 14 others. He remained active after retirement, especially in being an encourager to friends and associates and being an editorial reviewer.

Mr. Bald's parents came in contact with God's Church through the radio ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong.

In the summer of 1942, John and his mother attended three nights of evangelistic meetings conducted by Mr. Armstrong at the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, California. In 1951, as a teenager, John began attending Sabbath services in Pasadena, California, with his family. He started attending Ambassador College in 1953.

Following his graduation in 1958, John was sent to Chicago, Illinois, as a ministerial trainee. He returned to Pasadena in June 1959 to marry his wife, Nancy Sanders, and then worked in the Church's letter answering and visiting programs.

In 1960 the Balds moved to Chicago to assist in six congregations. Their son, Jim, was born during their stay in Chicago. In 1962, the Balds began pastoring the congregations

in St. Louis, Missouri, and Bloomington, Illinois. Between 1962 and their sabbatical in 1971-72, they served in Danville, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Omaha, Nebraska; Des Moines, Iowa; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Following their sabbatical year, the Balds served congregations in Columbus, Ohio, and in 1974 they were transferred to San Antonio, Texas. While in San Antonio, Mr. Bald put his fluent Spanish to work serving the Monterrey, Mexico, congregation. Beginning in 1980 the Balds served the congregations in La Crosse, Wisconsin; Rochester, Minnesota; and Mason City, Iowa. Their final assignment, from 1988 to 2002, was in the Corpus Christi and Harlingen, Texas, congregations.

Because of Mr. Bald's interest in other cultures, he was asked to speak at international Feast sites in Europe, Asia, South America, Africa and the Pacific islands. Mr. Bald's avid study of the Scriptures, his love of travel and his interest in history and geography made him a much-appreciated speaker.

Burk McNair writes of his lifelong friend and brother-in-law, "John Baird Bald was a man devoted to God, family, friends, Church and responsibility. He was a teacher—ever learning. He paid careful attention to his many friendships. During his years in college and assignments in the Church he was dependable



John Bald

and conscientious to do everything properly."

Jack Hendren announced Mr. Bald's death to the Corpus Christi congregation in this manner: "Mr. Bald joins that 'great cloud of witnesses' described in Hebrews 12. His life was characterized by the scripture, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.'"

The Church has lost a faithful servant. He was loved and deeply respected by his friends and peers. As Nancy says of her husband, "He had a loving ministry to God's flock for 44 years. He was a friend who was always there when you needed him. He wanted no greater legacy than to serve God, His people and family and friends."

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

services, and 309 attended the afternoon seminar.

Letters of invitation were sent to 1,421 *Good News* subscribers who had been receiving the magazine for at least two years inviting them to attend both Sabbath services and the seminar. Nineteen subscribers came for Sabbath services and an additional four came to the seminar, for a total of 23 “new” attendees.

Robin Webber and Paul Kieffer spoke on “A Heart Towards Prophecy” and “The 10 Kings of Revelation 17” during services. Subjects covered during the afternoon sessions included “The Mark of the Beast,” “Europe’s Energy Dependence and Bible Prophecy” and “The Two Witnesses.”

The Twin Cities brethren provided a potluck lunch following Sabbath services and light refreshments before the final session. One of the new couples who attended said they became subscribers to *The Good News* magazine because their church recommended the magazine to its members. Many UCG members expressed appreciation for the well-researched and insightful presentations.

Michael Hanisko

U.S. Regional Pastors Meet

The 10 U.S. regional pastors met for a three-day conference at Cincinnati, Ohio’s



Kathy and Ken Giese receive a plaque and gifts for their service in the South Central region

Eastgate Holiday Inn Nov. 10 to 12.

Several members of the Ministerial Ser-

vices Team, along with President Clyde Kilough and Council of Elders Chairman Bob Dick, led discussions regarding current activities and initiatives of the Church. Topics discussed included the pressing need to train and hire men for the ministry, conflict resolution, the Matthew 18 study paper, the annual ministerial review process and reports from each region. Britt Taylor, newly-appointed retirement coordinator, provided an update on the Church’s retirement policy.

During the conference, Mr. Kilough presented Ken and Kathy Giese with a plaque and gifts for their service in the South Central region. The Gieses have relocated to Sacramento, California, and Jim Servidio, who served as a regional pastor before his transfer to Houston, Texas, was welcomed back as a regional pastor, replacing Mr. Giese in the South Central region.

Bonnie Greider

Reader’s Digest Responses Begin

As of Nov. 25, about 4,500 responses to the card in the December U.S. *Reader’s Digest* had been received, 2,000 of them on Nov. 24 alone. The card offered the booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Since the ad was planned in early September, Clyde Kilough said, “the intensity of the economic crisis really ratcheted up, and we are hoping that the urgency of this will help wake people up and make them more attuned to the seriousness of the world situation! We typically expect between 30,000 and 40,000 replies to an *RD* ad; but if everyone is praying more fervently for people to see it, read it and respond, maybe this won’t be so typical.”

Camp Team Meets

The United Youth Camp team (UYC camp directors, Challenger II program director and preteen program coordinator) met at the home office Nov. 3 to 5.

Topics covered included camp directors’ reports for the last year, financial reports and preparations for our visit from American Camp Association teams this coming camp year, as the program is reviewed for renewal of our ACA accreditation.

The team reviewed the results from the new camper, staff and parent surveys. The

■ New Daily Video GN Commentary.

Beginning Nov.

10 a daily two- to four-minute video commentary has been taped and posted to the *GN* magazine site and YouTube. Some recent topics include: “New Hope for Peace in Congo,” “Heroes,” “Voice of God,” “Giving Thanks,” “All Created Equal?” “More Important Than Money?” “Why Believe in a God?” “Will It Happen Again?” “Truth Matters,” “Holy Men Fighting,” “Flying Blind”



UYC team has been assessing program outcomes for almost a decade and survey results again show that parents are very happy with the spiritual focus of camp. The team also adopted plans to go to a Web-based system for parent surveys in 2009. Discussion on camp policies, staff training,



President Clyde Kilough thanks Larry and Bonnie Greider for 10 years of coordinating the camp program

updates on preteen and Challenger II programs, plans for the 2009 Camp video and magazine and themes for Christian living sessions rounded out the agenda.

UYC overall coordinator Larry Greider had earlier informed the team of his intention to step down as coordinator. So the usual manpower discussions were highlighted by the need to appoint a new coordinator. (See “New Overall Camp Coordinator Named,” right.)

On Tuesday, Church president Clyde Kilough presented Larry and Bonnie Greider with a plaque and gifts showing the Church’s appreciation for their involvement in UYC since 1995, including their direction of the camp

team management since 1998.

Following a workshop on accounting procedures for camp and online application and registration systems on Wednesday, UYC team members headed home.

Doug Johnson

New Overall Camp Coordinator Named

Ministerial Services announced the appointment of Ken Treybig as the new overall camp coordinator Nov. 25. Mr. Treybig has served for over a decade as camp director for Camp Carter and the accounting manager of the overall camp budget. He pastors the East Texas and Lufkin, Texas, and Ruston, Louisiana, congregations.

Dave Register

Camp Dates Set

United Youth Camps are planned for: Pinecrest, Missouri, June 24 to July 2 (staff arrive June 23).

Hye Sierra, California, June 28 to July 5 (staff, June 27).

Woodmen, Alabama, June 28 to July 5. Carter, Texas, July 5 to 11 (staff, July 4).

Davidson, Oregon, Aug. 2 to 9 (staff, Aug. 1).

Heritage, Pennsylvania, Aug. 9 to 16 (staff, Aug. 8).

What’s New on the Web?

and “What’s Your Net Worth?” www.gnmagazine.org

■ UCG Commentary.

“Life Transforming Changes,” “Why the U.S. Attack Inside Syria Is Significant,” “President-Elect Obama’s Honeymoon in a Hurricane” and much more at www.ucg.org/commentary

Featured Link

■ *Beyond Today* Web site. www.beyondtoday.tv

If you have questions or comments, please contact: webmaster@ucg.org



Calendar of Events

Dec. 7-9: Great Lakes Region ministerial conference, Zanesville, Ohio.

Dec. 16-18: Council of Elders meetings.

Dec. 23-27: Winter Family Weekend, Louisville, Kentucky, from Tuesday evening through Saturday evening, www.ucg.org/familyweekend/.

Dec. 26-28: Annual Northwest Weekend, Portland, Oregon. ABC Continuing Education Dec. 26-27 with presenters Ralph Levy and Dave Johnson. Teen Bible study, teen and adult dances, volleyball and basketball. Register now to attend at <http://nww.ucgpdx.org>.

Dec. 29-Jan. 4, 2009: Winter Camp, Montello, Wisconsin.

Jan. 16-18: Women’s Enrichment Weekend, “Anchoring Our Lives,” Southern California area (Garden Grove), www.ucg-gg.org (look under bulletin-events)

Jan. 20-29: Pastoral training class.

Feb. 6-8: Family Dance Weekend, Cincinnati East, Ohio (FouchB@greatoaks.com or cincywd@fuse.net).

Feb. 13-15: Dallas Young Adults Regional Weekend (www.ucg-dallas.org/ya).

Feb. 24-26: Council of Elders meetings.

March 20-22: Families for God Weekend, Minneapolis, Minnesota (dsmorker@yahoo.com).

May 3-4: General Conference of Elders annual meeting.

July 4: Akron, Ohio, 50th (www.ucgakron.org).

Treasurer’s Update

The fall Holy Day offerings, as reported in last issue, were favorable in comparison to previous year. As of Nov. 14, 2008, Holy Day offerings are up 6.2 percent over the previous year. While this is encouraging, it is also a time to be cautious as well. Even with a 6.2 percent increase in fall Holy Day offerings, the total income for the year through Nov. 14 increased only 2.2 percent over the previous year. This means that we are still running almost 2 percent below budget for the year.

The months of December and January are extremely important months in the fiscal year. Each year we receive an extra “bump” in income in December and January. Typically, we will receive an additional 4 to 5 percent of regular mail income. How much of a “bump” in income we receive this year will determine to a large degree how we will end this budget year and how we will need to plan and budget for next year.

At this point, it is difficult to project how much the economic crisis and downturn will impact the income of the Church. With the many uncertainties and unknowns facing the global economy right now, it is important that we be prudent in both our planning and spending. At the same time, we need to remember that it is not the economy that we ultimately look to, but it is to God that we look to provide and bless us with the resources needed to do His work.

As always, we give God thanks for His continued blessings. As well, we give thanks to the members of the Church and others who support the work generously through their faithfulness in giving tithes and offerings. Thank you.

Jason Lovelady

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