



News At a Glance

Regional Conferences Conclude in Zanesville

The Great Lakes Regional Ministerial Conference—the ninth and final of the regional conferences held over the past two years—concluded on Dec. 9, having begun two days earlier in Zanesville, Ohio. Presentations by Clyde and Dee Kilough, Jim Franks, David Register, Richard Thompson, Lyle Welty, Richard Pinelli and Randy Stiver emphasized the meeting's theme, based on 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

A total of 75 pastors, elders and their wives gathered over the course of the conference to hear material described by listeners as "outstanding" and "very practical." Lyle Welty, regional pastor of the Great Lakes area as well as local pastor of the Cincinnati East congregation, commented, "It was very good for all the elders, pastors and wives to get together for the instruction and fellowship."

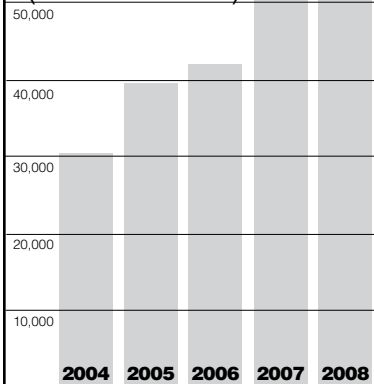
Ads and Annual Renewals Affect Circulation

The *Reader's Digest* ads are continuing to generate subscribers. Every month, we receive responses from our March 2000 ad for the *What Is Your Destiny?* booklet. Our current ad in

See "News at a Glance," page 2

United Statistics

World News & Prophecy
Up 101% in 4 Years
(November issues)



Clyde Kilough (left) interviews *Beyond Today* presenters Steve Myers, Gary Petty and Darris McNeely (photo by Peter Eddington)

100th *Beyond Today* Episode Recorded

by Peter Eddington

After three years of hard work, the *Beyond Today* presenters recorded their 100th program on Wednesday, Dec. 10! President Clyde Kilough used the occasion to produce a 16-minute episode of *About Our Father's Business* that focused on this *BT* milestone by interviewing all three presenters—Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty. You can view the interview online at members.ucg.org/fathersbusiness.

After a toast by Larry Salyer, the staff and crew enjoyed time together reminiscing about the excitement and challenges of the past 36 months. One hundred programs have now been recorded, covering a wide range of important topics from basic biblical knowledge to end-time prophecy, from doctrine to family living, from Christian living to addictions and

from God's Holy Days to pagan holidays. It's been quite a task!

View the Programs Online

You can view all of our edited programs online at beyondtoday.tv and also at YouTube, GodTube and Yahoo Video. Simply type in "Beyond Today" in the search field and get the links to each program.

In addition, dozens of one-minute and two-minute *Beyond Today* commentaries have also been uploaded—giving a biblical perspective on life and on a wide array of subjects with interesting verbal illustrations. You can also view all of these at YouTube.

Increasing Response

In the last four months, we have seen an increase in traffic at the *Beyond Today* Web site, to over 40,000 per month in November.

We believe this is a direct result of increased online advertising.

Not only are people visiting the Web site, they are responding. Through November, we have had 29,461 telephone and online responses to the programming. *Beyond Today* currently airs on 177 cable-access television channels, which air programs 267 times weekly. It is also broadcast on 10 radio stations in the United States and two nationwide cable networks in Canada.

A Team Effort

Our thanks go out to the many people involved in the production of the program, from our faithful studio team to the presenters themselves. It's certainly been a group effort! Please continue to pray for the success of this tool, along with all of our public proclamation efforts that announce the good news of God's Kingdom. **UN**

Financial Times Inspire Proactive Measures

by John Foster

The December quarterly meeting of the Council was called to order on Dec. 15 at the home office by Chairman Robert Dick. Mr. Dick noted that he, President Clyde Kilough and Strategic Planning Committee Chair Roy Holladay agreed that we must be looking at the budget and that we must be looking at the current financial state of the world. In such an unsure financial environment, the Church must take a proactive approach in order to preach the gospel effectively.

During the Council meetings, Jason Lovelady presented an in-depth written report to the Council that included monthly income and expenses. In his report, Mr. Lovelady summarized each expense by department for each month. The report showed projected cash flow throughout the year as well as information regarding when we came to the low point in our reserves in September.

Mr. Lovelady then pointed out the statistics for Category One income, which includes tithes and offerings.



This category accounts for almost two thirds of the overall income for the Church. He noted that for the last 52 weeks it was 1.61 percent above the previous year. For the last 24 weeks it was 0.94 percent above the previous year. For the last 14 weeks, it was 2.14 percent below the previous year.

Two Scenarios

Based on this trend and our current year-to-date performance, there are two scenarios we should consider for the remainder of this fiscal year. First, if we continue the 24-week trend for the rest of the year, which is 2.8

See "Council Meetings," page 6

Phase One Underway in New Web-Savvy Initiative

by Elizabeth Cannon

Frequent visitors to the UCG home page noticed a few changes take place on Friday, Dec. 12. The most easily recognizable of these were the new masthead and its variety of vibrant photos that target a larger demographic audience.

The most important change, however, is something most visitors may not even notice, but which is expected to drive more visitors to the UCG home page. The Web site has gone through a search engine optimization (SEO) overhaul, which is all part of an effort by the Web planning task force to bring more visitors to the Church's Web sites.

On Dec. 17, David Gosse, CEO of Vortaloptics.com, a search engine development company, gave an extensive presentation during the Council of Elders meeting. His presentation outlined several Web initiatives that the Church could implement, which would both preach the gospel more effectively on the Internet and also reduce costs to the Church. Council member Darris McNeely commented, "At this time, God has brought the generations together in the Church to provide a powerful opportunity to package and deliver the gospel. At this critical juncture of history, we have an opportunity before us."

Mr. Gosse, a member in the Las Vegas, Nevada, congregation, represented the Web planning task force (see "Web Task Force Prepares to Powerfully Reach World" in the August 2008 issue, www.ucg.org/un/un0808/).

Part of phase one of improving our effectiveness was the revitalization of the

See "Web Initiative," page 7

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News At a Glance

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the November issue has generated over 7,000 responses so far. However, now that we have implemented the one-year renewal process for *The Good News*—in order to more quickly verify committed subscribers—the circulation for the magazine will naturally decrease. The amount of response to the *Reader's Digest* ad, however, will partially offset this decrease. Currently there are 416,680 U.S. subscribers.

Correction

We inadvertently left out Maxcine Cole's name when we announced Martin Cole's ordination in the November *United News*. We regret the oversight.

Ministerial Services Reports Church Statistics

On Dec. 15, Ministerial Services reported various Church statistics to the Council of Elders. For the past three years Feast of Tabernacles attendance around the world has been static. The report showed that this is a bit misleading in that we have had some adjustments in Africa that have affected our total attendance figures. In the past three years we have seen our numbers in Ghana decrease. Our current Sabbath attendance in Ghana is around 600 to 700, but our Feast attendance was 545.

The Feast attendance this past year in Nigeria was 125 with a total Sabbath attendance (including scattered members) of about 180. A similar pattern has taken place in Kenya. Our Feast attendance there has leveled off at 300, although there are close to 700 attending Sabbath services. We have several hundred people attending services in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya who are unable to attend the Feast because of financial reasons.

Total worldwide Feast of Tabernacles attendance (including shut-ins who received tapes):

2005: **19,765**

2006: **20,436**

2007: **20,476**

2008: **20,349**

The following are the attendance figures from the Church Information System—the number listed as attending fluctuates from month to month.

U.S. Church attendance according to file Jan. 31, 2008: **15,498**.

U.S. Church attendance according to file Nov. 26, 2008: **15,345**.

U.S. baptisms 2007 through December: **178**.

U.S. baptisms 2008 through November: **134**.

See "News at a Glance," page 12

Profile: Lillie Mahone

by David Cobb

For many years, a certain grouping of members in God's Church has steadily grown in size, Sabbath after Sabbath. Though scattered all over the world, they share something quite special. What common thread unites this continually increasing collection of brethren? Each has received a gift of faith, hope and love in a small, flat envelope—sent by Lillie Mahone.

Mrs. Mahone attends the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation. She moved to Indiana at age 10 and has experienced a full, memorable life there. Together with her husband, Eddie, now deceased, she raised three beautiful daughters: Marilyn, Vera and Rachael. She has also been blessed with two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The first contact Mrs. Mahone had with God's Church came in 1960, when she began listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio. One of her earliest memories is of a program advertising the booklet *Why Were You Born?* This

particular program provided answers from the Bible that she had never heard before.

Listening to those radio programs began a lifelong love for the Bible and God's truth. After continuing to listen, read and study for several more years, Mrs. Mahone began attending Sabbath services in 1965 and was baptized in 1966. She has been a faithful member of God's Church ever since and now serves as a deaconess. Some of her activities include caring for shut-ins, sending flowers to the bereaved and praying for those experiencing trials.

In addition to her service in the Church, Mrs. Mahone is very active in the local community. She spends much of her free time volunteering for the Indianapolis chapter of OASIS, a national organization focused on providing educational opportunities that enrich the lives of older adults.

Her activities at OASIS include administering the registration process, data entry and organizing printed materials for participants in the various

classes. She loves to learn and especially enjoys improving her dance skills. Line dances such as the electric slide are among her current favorites. Between her active involvement in both Church and community, some have joked that you would need an appointment if you wanted to see her!

Her administrative experience in the OASIS program may prove very useful in the Kingdom of God. Mrs. Mahone says that in that future time, she would like to teach younger women about the wonderful arts of homemaking—cooking, sewing, managing the house and caring for the needs of a young family.

When asked about her favorite men and women of the Bible, Mrs. Mahone cites King David and Queen Esther. In her personal list of most memorable scriptures, one that stands out is Psalm 34:19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."

In the small, flat envelope that so many brethren have received over the years, they find a greeting card with



Lillie Mahone

encouragement appropriate for that moment in their lives. Well wishes for the sick, sympathy for the loss of a loved one, congratulations for a graduation, wedding or birth. The card is signed by everyone at Church that day—Mrs. Mahone sees to that!

For as many years as anyone can remember, she has faithfully made it her job to know when a card is needed, have an available supply and make sure that it is properly signed, sealed and delivered. It is an outstanding act of service. It is a labor of Christian love. It is a fine example and a wonderful legacy of faithful service to God and to His people. **UN**

FORWARD! Seeking the Eternal Treasure of God's Kingdom

by Larry Salyer



Early in my daughter's marriage, she lost both her diamond engagement ring and wedding band in a large park. She had gone there with family to take pictures in several grassy locations. At dinner she noticed that her rings were missing. The next morning, after having prayed for help, the group scoured the park on their knees. You've already guessed the end of this story—the rings were found!

What are you searching for in life? How would you feel if you stumbled upon some expensive jewelry in a field and were permitted to buy the field and keep the gems? Even better, what if you were singled out of a huge crowd to receive the treasure as a gift?

Oh, but you were! Jesus said in Matthew 13:44-46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in

a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

You and I have already received the pearl of great price. The Kingdom of heaven is reserved for us (1 Peter 1:4). But this wonderful opportunity was given to us freely as a gift! We didn't have to go search out the treasure. In fact, it would have been impossible for us to obtain the salvation on our own (John 6:44).

Do we realize how precious this gift is? The finders of both the treasure and the pearl in Jesus' analogies sold all they had to obtain these items of great value. Their actions showed they believed the treasure to be well worth the price.

Likewise, when we were called to God's plan of salvation, we counted the cost and agreed to give up everything to follow Christ. We saw the great value in the reward! Is that value as clear to us today as it was then? Are we still willing to sacrifice this life's

temporary pleasures and comforts in exchange for the eternal joy of salvation? Is the vision of that treasure still burning bright in our minds? If not, we need to rekindle it.

As society suffers the penalties for wrong living and misplaced priorities, life will get harder for all. Christians will not be immune. We must not let the cares of this life deter us from seeking the eternal treasure of God's Kingdom. He said, "Therefore do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

My daughter believes God gave her back her rings. They are as precious today as when she first received them—maybe more so. What about our heavenly treasure? Will we hold it close and seek both His Kingdom and His righteousness? There is no greater treasure to seek than that. **UN**

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News From Around the World

BBC4 Interviews UCG Minister About Xmas

by Elizabeth Cannon

On Dec. 22, BBC Radio 4 interviewed Peter Hawkins, pastor of the London Central and Eastern Counties congregations, regarding early Christian observances and how the United Church of God views the celebration of the birth of Christ.

A producer from BBC Radio 4 contacted the home office on Nov. 25 about the possible interview after coming across an article about why some Christians don't celebrate Christmas. After phoning Mr. Hawkins and discussing the modern observance of Christmas and its origins, the producer determined that UCG's views would fit best in the program's four-minute interview slot.

BBC recorded the interview with Mr. Hawkins on Dec. 2, at their recording studios in Oxford. Although it is only a four-minute interview, it is a first for the United Church of God in the British Isles.

Questions included: "Do you think that celebrating Christmas leads to the wrong emphasis among Christians?" "Is part of the problem that Christmas is rooted in ancient customs and religious practices that are pagan rather than Christian?" "What led you to question the specific events surrounding the modern celebration of Christmas?"

The interview aired on "Beyond Belief," a program that considers the belief systems of three guests on vari-

ous religious topics in order to discuss particular religious traditions that affect their values, worldviews and relationships with people of different religions. Included in the program is a four-minute interview with another guest who has unusual views on the particular subject of the program.

Incidentally, the producer was very interested in the publication *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* She read it through online and mentioned to Mr. Hawkins that she wanted to read it again before the interview.

The program is stored on the BBC's "Beyond Belief" Web page, www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/beyond_belief. **UN**

Canadian National Office Holds Post-Feast Budget Meetings

by Jeremy Lallier

UCG Canada's National Council gathered in Toronto, Ontario, on Nov. 18 for a flurry of post-Feast meetings. It concluded five days later with the Canadian ministerial conference, featuring the presentations "The Right Environment for Growth," "Honing Your Listening Skills," "Intervention/Mediation," "Using Church Literature as a Resource," "Church Youth Retention" and "Elder-Pastor Communication." These topics were covered by Richard Pinelli, Anthony Wasilkoff,

Graemme Marshall, Robert Berendt and Rainer Salomaa.

The National Office staff presented the Operations Plan for 2009-2010, which was approved and will receive final ratification from the National Conference this March. In addition to the Operations Plan, the budget was presented and approved, based on a 5 percent increase in the previous fiscal year.

Due to the recent global economic downturn, church accountant Kevin Ford introduced two contingency plans, both a "crisis budget," based on a hypothetical income reduction of 20 percent, and an "apocalypse budget," based on an income reduced by 75 percent.

Further discussion took place regarding the global financial crisis and how it may potentially affect the Church. As crises such as this one have a tendency to turn people towards God, the Church may experience increasing

membership coupled with decreasing funds—leading to the possibility of more webcasting of services in local areas, less driving, more in-home services, localized Feast sites and other cost-saving measures. With the realization that there still remains work to be done, attendees agreed on the importance of spiritual reinforcement.

Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, emphasized the importance of not worrying about our needs. During the meetings, it was understood that the responsibility of the Church is to forge ahead, trusting God, which will be done.

As attendee Edwin van Pelt aptly put it, "We are living in difficult times. We see through a glass darkly, but we do know that what we picture at the Feast of Tabernacles will ultimately become a reality. In the meantime, we continue to wait patiently for the Lord as we preach the gospel and prepare a people." **UN**



The Canadian National Office

Prisoner in Estonia Grateful for Feast Greetings

by Johnnie Lambert

At 53 years of age, Valdur Vesingi does not envision ever leaving prison. Valdur has spent the past eight years in Tartu, Estonia, where he is serving a 22-year sentence; but for the past two years, he has kept the Feast of Tabernacles and has served the Church in the quiet of his prison cell.

Valdur first became a subscriber to *The Good News* and *Bible Study Course* in February 2005. His request for English literature was unusual for an Estonian person. Subsequently, I discovered that although his first language is indeed Estonian, Valdur, who is very talented in languages, had learned to speak excellent English entirely on his own.

After several visits, we decided

that Valdur would attempt to translate a booklet into Estonian. After Valdur translated the booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* Toomas Schvak, who is an excellent, well-recognized Estonian translator, said that he himself could not do a better job than Valdur had done. Valdur has now completed three booklets and is presently translating *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

Paul Dzing, from Phoenix, Arizona, informed a number of Church members about Valdur, and suggested they send Valdur "Feast Greetings." During my visit with Valdur in November, he expressed great thankfulness, but was also quite frustrated, because he would be unable, due to his circumstances, to communicate his thanks back to all those people who had con-

tacted him. In lieu of personal thanks, Valdur gave me this thank-you note addressed to the brethren who were kind enough to remember him during the Feast of Tabernacles.

*Dear brothers and sisters,
Thank you very much for all your sincere greetings and best wishes to me at the Feast of Tabernacles! Thank you for your prayers for me and for being with me in your minds and hearts.*

"I was in prison and you came to visit me," said Jesus in Matthew 25:36.

And thanks to God for having His great spiritual family with me. I pray for you to God Almighty, brothers and sisters, and let His blessings be with you always!

Valdur from Estonia. UN

International News At a Glance

German Brethren Record Audio Good News

A *Gute Nachrichten* (Good News) subscriber from Berlin will be the first nonmember to receive audio recordings of *Gute Nachrichten* articles. The *Gute Nachrichten* audio program was started about two years ago and became regular about a year ago.

Volunteers Jürgen Haslop and Ludwig Queckbörner alternate recording the articles in MP3 format, and the Darmstadt congregation produces and mails the CDs as a service project to our elderly members who have trouble reading. When the reader asked that his subscription be canceled because of worsening eyesight, he was offered the audio CDs. "Your concern warms my old heart. Please send me the CDs," was the reader's response to the offer.

Three Deacons Ordained in East Africa

During the Feast of Tabernacles three deacons serving in Kenya were ordained by senior pastor John Elliott and elder Antonio Ndung'u. The new deacons are Simon N'gan'ga, Wycliffe Chiriswa and Kriphas Ongori.

These three men have proven themselves over time to be true servants to their individual congregations of Nairobi, Ogembo and Kitale, Kenya. The East African brethren were very excited over these ordinations, which came six months after Mr. Ndung'u was ordained as our first elder in the region. Twenty were also baptized in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda this year.

John Elliott

"Mr. Netherlands" Ordained Deacon

At the Feast of Tabernacles in Schluchsee, Germany, Paul Kieffer ordained Marcos Rosales as a deacon.

Mr. Rosales has been a member of UCG-Netherlands since 1995. Originally from the island of Curaçao, he moved to Holland



Marcos Rosales

in the 1970s to study electrical engineering at Technical University Delft. It was then that he came in contact with the Church, when he found a *Plain Truth* magazine in a recycling bin amidst old newspapers and magazines.

Mr. Rosales serves as treasurer, helps edit Dutch literature, supervises the translation of the *Bible Study Course* into Dutch and maintains the www.ucg-holland.nl Web site. He has also translated *Beyond Today* subtitles into his native language of Papiamentu.

Ghanaian Brethren Concerned About Election Tensions

December provided the opportunity for Ghana to show that African states can make democracy work with free, peaceful and open presidential elections on Dec. 7, 2008. Whether the aftermath of the elections continues to be peaceful remains to be seen.

Neither of the two main parties gathered enough votes to win. The governing party's candidate received 49 percent of the vote while the main opposition party's candidate received 48 percent.

In accordance with Ghanaian law, a runoff election had to be scheduled for Dec. 28. It is instructive to note that the Dec. 13, 2008, edition of *The Economist* magazine described the elections as "a so-far-peaceful presidential election." However, the potential for violence remains, and tensions appear to be rising.

David Meselebe, a member from Accra who also serves as the Church's local treasurer, stated that the campaigning of the two main parties has deteriorated to a level of accusations and charges of corruption. Tensions are growing along tribal lines, and some incidents have been reported.

Members hope Ghana will not follow the pattern of other recent African elections. Up until a year ago, Kenya was for many the African poster child for Western-style democracy. That image was destroyed with ethnic violence last January following national elections. Nigeria and Zimbabwe have likewise failed to have violence-free elections.

If the Ghanaian elections are completed peacefully, it is likely that the lives of our members will not be significantly affected. However, if violence should escalate along tribal or even political party lines, the effects on the country and our membership could be severe.

The United Church of God currently has approximately 600 members in Ghana, with nearly all living in the southern half of the country. The Church in Ghana would appreciate your prayers regarding these elections that they "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Thomas Clark

Jordan Project Update: Walking Where Jesus Walked

by Lena VanAusdle

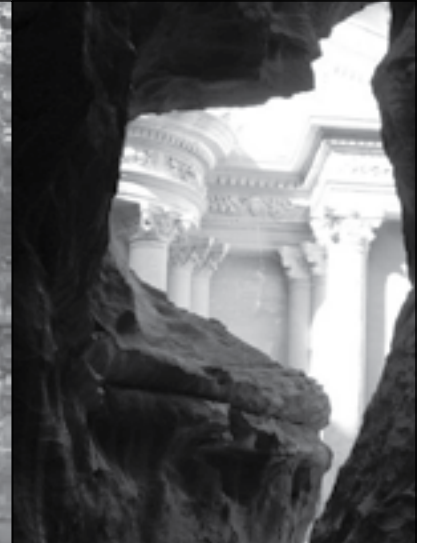
As of the writing of this article the “Jordan Crew,” as we call ourselves, have been in Jordan for exactly four months. The opportunity to be here has been a blessing and an adventure. Besides working in our various positions of service we have also had the chance to do a little traveling around.

These travels have taken us to places of God’s creation of incomparable beauty, and also to historical sites representing the ingenuity of man and oftentimes where the two meet. One such trip was to Wadi Musa (the Valley of Moses) and Petra. ‘Ain Musa is the spring where Moses supposedly struck the rock to get water for the Israelites. Petra, a geologist’s dream, is a wonderland of natural beauty and human ingenuity. Standing on the mountains and looking over the expanse of valleys and hills, it is easy to picture the wandering of the Israelites.

The most recent trip we took, however, was less about human ingenu-



“Jordan Crew,” Zach and Emily Troyer, Tine Banda, and Lewis and Lena VanAusdle; Treasury, Petra’s most recognizable image, peeks out of al-Siq, the narrow gorge that leads to the carved rock face; close-up of rock carvings in Petra (photos by Lena VanAusdle)



ity and more about the beauty that God created—Mount Nebo. “Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the South,

and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him, ‘This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “I will give it to your descendants.” I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there’” (Deuteronomy 34:1-4).

The view from the mountain is breathtaking, and looking down on the valley, with Jericho in the distance and the Dead Sea and the Promised Land beyond, is awe inspiring. We tried to imagine what it was like for Moses to look over this land and know that he would never go there; however, my imagination isn’t that vivid.

Another stop on this trip was Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan, or Al-Maghtas. It doesn’t look like much, but the historical significance makes up for it. It’s an out-of-the-way place that takes several bus rides to access. It’s also a military zone. We had to go through security and pass by a

guard or two, but they were all very friendly.

What was the reason for our trip to this out-of-the-way locale? This is the purported place of Jesus’ baptism. “It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:9-11).

“And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. Then many came to Him and said, ‘John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.’ And many believed in Him there” (John 10:40-42).

After putting our hands in the Jordan River and glancing across the banks to Israel, we left the area and



headed home. The several hours we had on the bus ride home gave us plenty of time to think about our experience. We have always known that we needed to walk in Jesus’ footsteps spiritually (Matthew 16:24), but walking in His physical footsteps makes that spiritual walk all the more meaningful. **UN**



The Jordan River (photo by Lena VanAusdle)

Tel Aviv University Professor Thanks United Youth Corps

Oct. 25, 2008

Recently the home office received a letter of appreciation for our summer Youth Corps project in Jordan and Israel. The Youth Corps volunteers spent one month assisting the archaeological team from Tel Aviv University with excavations of Tel Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley. The letter was written to UCG President Clyde Kilough from Tel Aviv University Professor Israel Finkelstein, director of the Megiddo expedition.



Israel Finkelstein (photo by Joel Meeker)

Dear Mr. Kilough,

The directors and staff of the Megiddo Expedition would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the team members who came under the auspices of Mr. Joel Meeker and the United Youth Corps. The Youth Corps group was a wonderful addition to our team. They set a fine example to the other team members by their hard work and dedicated attitude and their friendly and cheerful outlook was a wonderful social asset.

In addition, although they were not archaeology students, they were all interested to learn about the many aspects of the dig and we feel confident that they learned a great deal in relation to the archaeology and history of ancient Israel.

We are an international team; our staff and team members come from a dozen different countries, yet the participation of the United Youth Corps was especially memorable.

In short, we have only praise for all the members of the Youth Corps, and we sincerely hope that more team members from the Youth Corps will be able to join the expedition next season, together with Joel Meeker and his family.

With all best wishes and kind regards,
Professor Israel Finkelstein
Director. **UN**



Youth Corps volunteers at Tel Megiddo; Israel Finkelstein, sorting through potsherds (photos by Joel Meeker and Jessica Schultz)



From the Word



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It's Time for a Spiritual "Attitude Check"

■ Self-evaluation is a necessary part of spiritual growth. Let's take a look at our spiritual reflections in the mirror of God's Word.

by James D. Cannon

In warfare, many times it becomes necessary for soldiers to go through an "attitude check" before a battle. At this critical moment, a soldier must assess the dangerous reality of what he or she is about to face and muster courage and confidence to enter the battle ready to fight and come out of it alive. It's a mind-set that keeps a soldier from looking back in fear and instead keeps him or her moving forward to victory. When an army is at a turning point in the battle, it is especially important that they check their attitudes, because such a win-or-lose situation could affect their future as a nation.

This task is also essential for each member of God's Church to do.

What Is an "Attitude Check"?

An attitude check is a process of evaluating your principles and your determination in light of present circumstances and conditions that surround you. An attitude check can be painful if you have been letting down, not performing to the highest standards of the leader—in our case, Jesus Christ. However, it should be a positive motivator that assists us in making the necessary changes in our lives that will lead us to winning the battle we are involved in—gaining eternal life and entering into the family of God (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Ever since God, through Jesus Christ, recreated the heavens and the earth, the most important battle and mission for God's people has been internal—a

battle in the mind and in the thought processes. We are surrounded in this world by a hostile environment made up of people and governments that hate God and God's way of life—and for the most part, this hatred is unbeknownst to them.

The world is filled with opportunities, gadgets, concepts, ideas, attitudes and other powerful influences that shape mankind's mental framework. These influential forces are, for the most part, inspired by the god of this world, Satan the devil. Satan understands mankind's proclivity to follow the undercurrent of "popular opinion" (Ephesians 2:1-3). We seek out newer and better things, are only satisfied in the short term, are easily distracted and at times act as people pleasers. If we are not careful on a daily basis, we can fall into the trap of adjusting our lives and thought patterns to be in line with the best practices and best standards of the world around us instead of always adjusting and refocusing on the high standards of our elder Brother Jesus Christ.

Some may say none of us measure up to that standard, and that would be true. However, Jesus Christ came to earth and set the example for us to follow. Our job is to work hard daily, through God's Holy Spirit in us, to follow Jesus Christ and become like Him (John 12:26; Galatians 3:27-29). We must not allow ourselves to fall into living by the best standards of this world, because they will lead us in the wrong direction (Romans 12:1-2).

So let's take an attitude check today and look into our reflections in the mirror of God's Word. Philippians 4:8 is a passage we normally consider to be a list of things we should "meditate on," but it is also a list of seven internal character traits we should strive to develop. In his commentary, Adam Clarke tells us that "think on these things" (King James Version) means we should

"esteem them highly, recommend them heartily and *practice them fervently*" (emphasis added).

God inspired Paul to list these traits for us to meditate upon often to see how we measure up to these standards. These standards reflect the mind of Jesus Christ and the areas of His mind that need to be developing within each of us—the members of the Body of Jesus Christ.

Let's check our own attitudes in relation to these virtues and see how we individually measure up to Jesus Christ.

"Whatever Things Are True"

Paul begins the verse with the Greek word for "true," *alethes*, which means openness, not concealing, living a life of truth. People growing in *alethes* have nothing to hide. They are right with God; they have repented of past sins and are led by God's Holy Spirit. They are open and honest in conversations with others and, when alone, maintain closeness with God and fight the downward pulls that surround them and that tug at them daily. By being genuine at all times, both inwardly and outwardly, they are not hypocrites.

John 4:24 reminds us that God must be worshipped "in spirit and truth." A true member of Christ's Body cannot act one way, putting on a vain show on the Sabbath day, while living entirely different when alone. One must live the truth at all times. In Ephesians 4:24 God inspired Paul to write, "Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

"Whatever Things Are Noble"

Here the Greek word is *semnos*, meaning to be serious-minded, venerable, respected, esteemed, admired, honorable and honest. Again, being noble or honest requires one to exhibit

this attribute inwardly and outwardly, publicly and privately.

To be genuinely noble requires God's Spirit working in us, as well as a commitment on our part to follow the lead and inspiration of God's Spirit. God calls us in our sins. We are not noble or wise at that time. But after repentance, baptism and receiving God's Spirit, we begin to put on the nobility of Jesus Christ daily through prayer, Bible study, fellowship, meditation and fasting. We grow in becoming a new creation—a new man (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:20-24).

"Whatever Things Are Just"

In Greek, the word translated "just" is *dikaos*, meaning to be equitable in character and action, to be innocent, not crafty or cunning, and to be righteous—keeping the commandments physically and spiritually.

God hates the act of playing favorites. God does not look on the outward appearance or judge people by what they appear to be. God looks on the heart, the inward man (1 Peter 1:17). God looks at us the way we really are. He is absolutely fair with each one of us.

A true member of the Body of Christ must be growing to be just, not one who "plays politics" to get recognition or position. That's why God instructs His ministers not to "lay hands on anyone hastily" (1 Timothy 5:22). We must cast away our proclivity to join cliques and to give opportunities to those who look good outwardly. Hebrews 12:22-24 tells us that those who become just and overcome the downward pull of playing favorites and politics will maintain their registry in heaven as members of "the church of the firstborn."

"Whatever Things Are Pure"

The Greek here is *hagnos*, which means to become clean, innocent, modest, chaste and pure. Because the world around us is becoming more corrupt at an astounding rate, we must be ever vigilant to maintain the purity of Jesus Christ in us. We cannot become prey to or fall into the trap of adjusting our lives to the best practices of this world. If we do, we will be falling short of the standard God set for us as members of the Body of Jesus Christ.

We must not conform to this world but be transformed, changed, become totally different from the way we were when we were in the world (Romans 12:1-2). We can only do this through daily two-way communication with God—proper prayer and Bible study—which leads us to obedience and overcoming through daily repentance. Then every day, our once dirty robes become pure and white and our inward man becomes more and more like Christ (2 Corinthians 4:16).

"Whatever Things Are Lovely"

"Lovely" is translated from the Greek word *prospiles*, meaning to be friendly toward others and not per-

verted. When we think of loveliness, a flower, a painting or our children usually come to mind. Men describe their wives as lovely. But to God, all of His people are lovely if they are growing in friendliness and unity, overcoming bitterness and critical opinions and avoiding profanity, which is so common and prevalent in today's media-driven world. We all must become lovely, harmonious, unified and pure-minded before God and each other. If we do, we will become increasingly more Christ-like and pleasing to God.

"Whatever Things Are of Good Report"

"Good report" is from the Greek word *euphemos*, meaning to be well spoken of, reputable, of high moral and ethical standards. We all have made some mistakes in the past, before God called us and placed us in His Church. And unfortunately, we continue to make mistakes after our calling. Some of our former or present neighbors, associates, relatives and friends may think we have "lost it" because of our beliefs and our obedience to God. Additionally, we may have marred our own reputation and caused others to hold us in lower esteem by erring in some way or by offending others.

Even though we have made these mistakes, our reputation with God and Jesus Christ is what counts. If we have made mistakes, we must repent before God and ask Him to help us make things right with our fellow man, according to His will. We must ask Him for the courage and the strength to make the necessary changes in our lives and begin building our reputation back day by day through God's Spirit in us (Proverbs 3:11-12).

"If There Is Any Virtue"

Translated from the Greek word *arête*, the seventh character trait, virtue, means to be excellent and praiseworthy. As we continue day by day in our fight against the pulls of this world, our own human nature and the darts of Satan the devil, we grow slowly toward becoming excellent and praiseworthy. We very likely will not see this in ourselves, but others will begin to see a difference. Above all, God will see it and be pleased by the genuine character growth and development He observes and develops us as we yield to Him.

Virtue, in effect, summarizes the first six attributes and brings our character development full circle. Our attitude check could have begun with virtue and worked backward yielding the same results—each one of us seeing the need to be serious about developing holy, righteous character together—by yielding to God and by God working in us.

Read and meditate on Philippians 4:8 often, and consider doing a spiritual attitude check today. We, as a Church, will be much better for it. **UN**

James Cannon is a deacon in the West Palm Beach, Florida, congregation.

Stephen: A Martyr for God

■ What lessons can we learn from one of the Bible's most tenacious examples?

by Jason L. Hyde

As anyone who has been around a small child can attest, the example of others can be a powerful teaching tool for a young person. Whether the example is positive or negative, children, like dry sponges dropped in water, readily soak in the habits and attitudes of those around them.

God knows the vital role examples can play in teaching His children today. Various accounts in the Bible show how God preserved the lives of many people.



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While some of the stories portray the events of wicked individuals, many characters highlighted in the Bible were devout, obedient followers of God. Their stories have been maintained to provide Christians with examples to study. One of the most vivid and important examples God included is that of the deacon Stephen—the first martyr for God mentioned by name in the book of Acts.

Stephen, counted among those who were “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,” possessed certain qualities that God Himself desires to see in all His children (Acts 6:3).

A Student of the Word

One of the most important aspects of Stephen's character was the fact that he knew God's Word. At his trial Stephen, from memory, traced the history of God's chosen people from the time of Abraham down through the age of Solomon. In fact, several times Stephen was able to quote directly from the Old Testament (Acts 7:32, 40, etc.).

This close familiarity with God's instructions is an expectation for all Christians. Christians should follow Paul's urging to Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Today, we have the added benefit of the New Testament that shows us the example of Jesus and His disciples living the new teachings Jesus gave. Stephen's example should stir us to delve into the Bible.

Not only was Stephen well-versed in Scripture, but he had also learned to heed the examples and guidance found in the Sacred Text. The Pharisees and Sadducees who surrounded Stephen had continually quoted from the Old Testament trying to confuse or trap Christ and the early apostles. They, too, studied the Old Testament as well as their own traditions; however, they were blinded and their pride and hypocrisy kept them from being corrected and instructed by the Word of God (Matthew 23:2-7, 13; Romans 11:8).

The apostle Paul would later point out, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Stephen had learned this critical lesson.

Our Father corrects and instructs His children (Hebrews 12:5-7). God often uses the examples He provides in His Word to help Christians learn important lessons. It is often the examples found in Scripture that serve as the greatest teaching tools (1 Corinthians 10:1-6). Stephen, as a servant of God, had learned this valuable lesson.

In his defense, he recounted the many times God had intervened to help Israel, and yet, the children of Israel repeatedly turned from God. Stephen sternly rebuked the leaders, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51-53).

They refused to learn and be corrected by God's Word. On the contrary, Stephen set a powerful example of willingly submitting to God's direction.

Learning from those who had deserted God in the past, Stephen never turned from his devotion to God and His truth. When tested, Stephen, led by the Spirit, readily responded with wisdom, leaving those arguing with him with only false accusations (Acts 6:10-14).

A Man of Faith

In addition to his love of God's Word, Stephen was also a man of great faith. He was described as “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5). So great was his faith, it is revealed that Stephen, “full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (verse 8). The brief passages about Stephen's

life reveal a man of tremendous, courageous faith.

As the fledgling Church was growing rapidly and the apostles' preaching grew ever bolder, Stephen was falsely accused of blaspheming God. He was brought before the Sanhedrin to answer these charges. It could easily have been both humiliating and frightening. Undoubtedly, this turn of events stretched and tested Stephen's faith. He knew well what happened to Christ—the beatings and horrible death that awaited those drawing the ire of the mob. Those thoughts could easily have been on his mind.

Yet Stephen's faith was unwavering. Recognizing his own mortality, the faithful deacon recounted how Abraham had died without having received the promised inheritance, knowing that God would resurrect him later (Acts 7:5). Stephen's faith in God's promises of redemption, resurrection and eternal life never wavered despite the severity of his trial.

As a student of the Bible, Stephen knew how Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego had answered King Nebuchadnezzar when asked to compromise with God's law (Daniel 3:16-18). Stephen knew God could protect him. He never questioned God's power; instead, he lived by faith.

Stephen's example of faith should rouse all Christians to draw near to God through faith. Our Creator desires that His people live by faith as Stephen did. Stephen's power did not rest in himself. Rather, by living in complete faith Stephen was able to access God's power through the Holy Spirit. As Christ taught, it is through *believing* prayer—by faith—that all things may be accomplished (Matthew 21:22). Stephen learned and applied this wonderful truth in his life, leaving a tangible example for all peoples.

A Servant at Heart

Perhaps the most important aspect of Stephen's character was his willingness to submit to God and serve His people. Stephen understood the fundamental principle of a service. Following Christ's instruction to have a servant's heart, Ste-

phen developed an intense willingness to be humble and to serve his brethren (Matthew 20:27-28).

As the Church grew, there arose a need for men and women to fulfill the physical needs of the work (Acts 6:1-2). Stephen was among the seven original deacons chosen to serve in this capacity. He did not react by saying, “Me, wait on tables? You've got to be joking.” Instead, Stephen joyfully served the brethren. He expressed a willingness to attend to the widows' daily needs. These were not glamorous duties in the eyes of men. However, God saw in Stephen the serving, obedient attitude He desires to see in all His children.

Stephen fulfilled all the requirements of a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-12). As a result of his faithful obedience and service to the Church, Stephen will undoubtedly receive a great reward in the Kingdom. “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (verse 13). This example of a faithful saint willing to serve God and the Church provides a benchmark for Christians today.

A Martyr for God

The conclusion of Stephen's story recapitulates these three vital characteristics. “Then they”—Stephen's accusers and would-be murderers—“cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city... And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:57-60).

Even as death approached, Stephen recalled the familiar promises listed in God's Word. Having complete faith in God, Stephen willingly submitted to God's will and died. Even in death, he served the brethren by providing a riveting example of how to learn from God's Word, live by faith and serve the Creator. **UN**

Jason Hyde is a member of the Louisville, Kentucky, congregation.

“Council Meetings,” continued from page 1

percent below budget, we would end the year with \$23,820,000 while we budgeted for \$24,500,000, leaving a shortfall of \$680,000. The second scenario projects a flat scenario or no increase over last year. We would then end the year with \$23,580,000, which is \$920,000 below the budget.

Of these two scenarios, Mr. Lovelady stated that it would be prudent to look at things through scenario two. If the income drops by February, we must position ourselves to cut programs even further. We can revise the decision at the February meetings, but right now, the trends show scenario two as the most likely.

He then offered three suggestions of program areas that could be put on hold. First, the \$550,000 allocated in the budget to be used in developing

the Denton property. This implementation wasn't expected to take place until later, so this would not have impacted the budget at this time.

The second program is the \$150,000 that was set aside to determine the air-time feasibility of TV.

The third area involves the implementation of a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for United Church of God employees, which was to take effect in January. The COLA is an increase in salaries, which would offset rises in living expenses due to inflation. This would have cost \$212,000 for the last six months of this fiscal year. But once this is put into place, the total yearly cost would be close to \$450,000.

If these three programs are put on hold, the shortfall in scenario two will be covered.

Following the Council meeting, Mr. Kilough sent a letter to all UCG

employees to acknowledge their hard work and dedication and to inform them of the decision to delay implementing the COLA. He concluded, “On behalf of everyone in the administration and on the Council, I sincerely thank you for your patience and sacrifice in this challenging time.” The Council will revisit the issue at the February Council meeting, after another couple of months have passed to see how the income is tracking.

Another top priority for discussion at the February Council meeting will be our long-term education programs, especially the training of new pastors.

Web Initiatives

While some programs may be put on hold, other efforts to preach the gospel are proving to be both cost effective and successful. Our recent Web initiatives have reduced the cost

that the Church incurs from print ads and also reach a wider audience.

In November 2008, animated display and banner advertising of our literature was added at Yahoo, Google and their partner Web sites. This now supplements the keyword search ads that have been running for many years.

Statistically, it has been shown that search results improve greatly (an average of 26 percent) when accompanied by display advertising. In just the first two weeks we saw our cost per response drop at both Yahoo and Google for our search advertising since incorporating the display ads.

As more Web initiatives—such as the newly restructured UCG home page and

other search engine marketing strategies—take effect, we will see the Church continuing to bring the message of the Kingdom of God to more people around the world. **UN**

To read more reports from the Council meetings, visit <http://members.ucg.org/council/reports/>.



Aaron Dean and Clyde Kilough (photo by Jeremy Lalier)

Good News Circulation Around the World

Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total	Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total	Country/Territory	Eng.	Fren.	Ger.	Ital.	Span.	Total
Albania	2			4		6	Ghana	602	1				603	Oman	17					17
Algeria	24	191				215	Gibraltar	1					1	Pakistan	228					228
Angola	4	5				9	Greece	57			1		58	Panama	41			23		64
Anguilla	4					4	Grenada	97					97	Papua New Guinea	578					578
Antigua & Barbuda	15					15	Guadeloupe	2	12				14	Paraguay	12					12
Argentina	310	1		3	850	1,164	Guatemala	73				2,400	2,473	Peru	180				5,300	5,480
Armenia			4			4	Guinea	1	1				2	Philippines	13,698					13,698
Aruba	59					59	Guyana	352					352	Poland	33	1	2	2		38
Australia	36,470	6	3	6	43	36,528	Haiti	11	24				35	Portugal	264	2			12	278
Austria	70		287	1		358	Honduras	37				89	126	Qatar	15					15
Bahamas	326	1				327	Hong Kong	290					290	Réunion		11				11
Bahrain	20					20	Hungary	14		2	1		17	Romania	64		1	1		66
Bangladesh	22					22	Iceland	18		2			20	Russia	136					136
Barbados	569					569	India	2,921					2,921	Rwanda	9	134				143
Belarus	8					8	Indonesia	216	2				218	San Marino				2		2
Belgium	297	108	7	1		413	Iran	122					122	Saudi Arabia	33					33
Belize	116					116	Iraq	11					11	Senegal		2				2
Benin	8	37				45	Ireland	300	1				301	Serbia-Montenegro	24			3		27
Bermuda	53					53	Isle of Man	24					24	Seychelles	98	1				99
Bhutan	7					7	Israel	238					238	Sierra Leone	13					13
Bolivia	42	1			400	443	Italy	338	2	4	3,392		3,736	Singapore	1,793					1,793
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2					2	Ivory Coast	12	123				135	Slovakia	4					4
Botswana	93					93	Jamaica	1,262					1,262	Slovenia	3					3
Brazil	1,707				406	2,113	Japan	20					20	Solomon Islands	143					143
British Virgin Islands	22					22	Jordan	47					47	South Africa	22,098	4	2			22,104
Brunei	2					2	Kenya	728	1				729	South Korea	3					3
Bulgaria	11					11	Kiribati	2					2	Spain	218	2	5	1	84	310
Burkina Faso		18				18	Kuwait	21					21	Sri Lanka	452					452
Burundi	1	29				30	Kyrgyzstan	1					1	St. Kitts & Nevis	69					69
Cambodia	2					2	Laos	2					2	St. Lucia	184					184
Cameroon	71	148				219	Latvia	11					11	St. Martin	1					1
Canada	18,949	201	1	2	29	19,182	Lebanon	11	1				12	St. Vincent & Grenadines	86					86
Cape Verde	1					1	Lesotho	37					37	Sudan	4					4
Cayman Islands	20					20	Liberia	2					2	Suriname	49					49
Central African Rep.		3				3	Libya	12					12	Swaziland	51					51
Chad		2				2	Lithuania	75		8			83	Sweden	261		1	1		263
Chile	193	1	5	2	4,200	4,401	Luxembourg	17		11			28	Switzerland	111	39	311	3		464
China	133					133	Macao	5					5	Syria	5					5
Colombia	216				500	716	Macedonia	5					5	Tahiti	2					2
Comoros		1				1	Madagascar	4	8				12	Taiwan	15					15
Cook Islands	4					4	Malawi	451					451	Tanzania	144	1				145
Costa Rica	76				112	188	Malaysia	1,122	1				1,123	Thailand	55					55
Croatia	8		1			9	Mali		6				6	Togo	9	114				123
Cuba					32	32	Malta	47			1		48	Tonga	50					50
Cyprus	20	1				21	Martinique		22		1		23	Trinidad & Tobago	1,275					1,275
Czech Republic	20			3		23	Mauritius	318	92		1		411	Tunisia	1	7				8
Dem. Rep. of Congo	1	61				62	Mexico	511	2	2	4	8,200	8,719	Turkey	7					7
Denmark	137					137	Moldova	3					3	Turks & Caicos	11					11
Dominica	58					58	Montserrat	1					1	Uganda	50					50
Dominican Republic	46			35		81	Morocco	14	16				30	Ukraine	95					95
Ecuador	58	1	1		41	101	Mozambique	2					2	United Arab Emirates	77					77
Egypt	41	1				42	Myanmar	36					36	United Kingdom	6,478	2	2	2		6,484
El Salvador	47	2			1,149	1,198	Namibia	73					73	United States	414,536	50	37	6	2,051	416,680
Eritrea	167					167	Nepal	32					32	Uruguay	20					20
Estonia	259		2			261	Nauru	2					2	Uzbekistan	1					1
Ethiopia	469	1				470	Netherlands	1,410	2		3		1,415	Vanuatu	57	2				59
Faroe Islands	2					2	Netherlands Antilles	55					55	Venezuela	92				79	171
Finland	121					121	New Caledonia		1				1	Vietnam	14					14
Fiji	200					200	New Zealand	4,216	1				4,217	Wallis & Futuna		1				1
France	235	585	3	2		825	Nicaragua	26		13			39	Yemen	1					1
French Guiana	5	4				9	Niger		2				2	Zambia	1,002	1				1,003
French Polynesia	2					2	Nigeria	4,151	2				4,153	Zimbabwe	3,002					3,002
Gabon	3	6				9	Niue Island	2					2							
Gambia	24					24	Norfolk Island	1					1							
Germany	421	1	4,661	4		5,087	Norway	166	1	1			168							

Includes all language editions and versions as of December 2008. Eng.=English; Fren.=French; Ger.=German; Ital.=Italian; Span.=Spanish

“Web Initiative,” continued from page 1

UCG home page. The goal is to make ucg.org one of the top Web sites that come up on a search results page, drawing in more first-time visitors who may be searching for the truth. We hope to attract 4 million first-time visitors this year, but in addition to new visitors, we also want to increase Web visitor loyalty. We have now established the baseline of visitors who return to our Web sites at 27 percent. Our first

year target now is to increase that to 42 percent.

In order to better address questions that people may be asking on the Internet, the UCG home page now features a new section prepared by editorial content manager Mike Bennett called “Frequently Asked Bible Questions.” These range from Christian living questions such as “How can a Christian choose a good movie?” to challenging scriptural questions like “What is the unpardonable sin?” The content of the questions and answers is struc-

tured to increase our search visibility. We plan to add new questions each week.

Further improvements include the addition of more video commentaries. Besides the weekly *Beyond Today* commentaries, visitors can now watch the new daily *Good News* commentaries that began on Nov. 10. Both commentaries are located at the bottom of the home page screen. *GN* commentaries are also featured on the *GN* Web site, gnmagazine.org, as well as on YouTube.

A Quick Links section in the left side-

bar highlights certain key sections of the Web site frequented by visitors. These links will change throughout the year to promote seasonal topics and information.

Visitors can also follow UCG updates by using Twitter, an Internet social networking and microblogging service. On the left sidebar of the home page, visitors can find a Twitter button to begin the process of receiving regular United Church of God updates. In addition to the revamped sidebar, the navigation tabs have been redesigned to be more user-friendly, using

a larger font to aid the visually impaired.

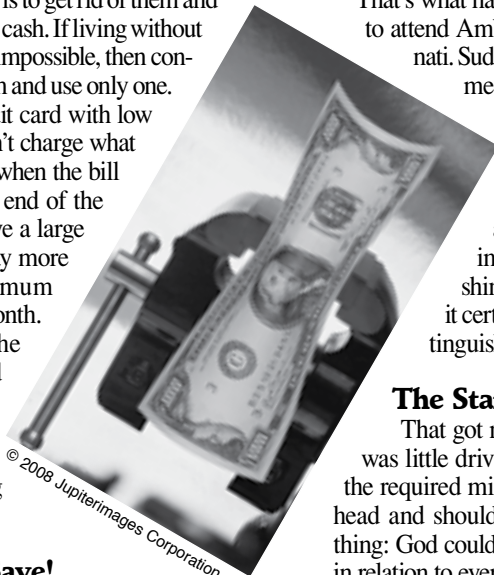
Over the next several months, Internet manager Aaron Booth will monitor the difference in Web site activity in regard to the latest changes. Last year, a combined total of 3.1 million unique visitors accessed UCG’s six proclamation Web sites (ucg.org, gnmagazine.org, beyond-today.tv, verticalthought.org, wnponline.org and thisistheway.org). We expect to see this number climb over the next fiscal year as more innovative initiatives take effect. **UN**

Children's
Corner

because your neighbor bought a new one isn't spending your money wisely. Plan your shopping trips, and only shop once or twice a week. The more often you shop, the more money you will spend.

Exercise Control Over Your Credit Cards

The best advice is to get rid of them and pay as you go with cash. If living without that credit card is impossible, then consolidate all of them and use only one. Try to find a credit card with low interest rates. Don't charge what you can't pay off when the bill comes due at the end of the month. If you have a large balance, try to pay more than the minimum payment each month. Many times the interest charged is more than the minimum payment, so you'll only be getting deeper in the hole.



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Save! Save! Save!

Hopefully, at the end of the month your expenditures will be less than your income, and you can save the difference. Put this money in an emergency fund and let it build. Start a savings account with your next paycheck (or as soon as possible—paying bills and paying off credit cards comes first in your emergency plan) and continue to save until you have an amount equal to six months' income or more. An amount that equals two years' salary would be a good goal. Withdraw and spend money from this account only for emergencies. Try these ideas and see how much you can save.

Hebrews 13:5-8 tells us: "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." God will keep His promises. Let's do our part too.

*Ruth Bailey
Chattanooga, Tennessee, congregation*

Nothing Special

When your way of life is one that sets you apart from the world by default, it's easy to grow accustomed to that glaring difference and take it for granted.

Until, of course, that difference disappears.

That's what happened to me when I moved out to attend Ambassador Bible Center in Cincinnati. Suddenly, I found in everyone around

me the defining characteristics that had set me apart from the world. And just like that, I realized—I was nothing special.

The principle here is simple: a light shining in the darkness is impossible to ignore, while a light shining among other lights—though it certainly adds to the effect—is indistinguishable as a separate entity.

The Standard That Counts

That got me thinking—back home, there was little driving me to go above and beyond the required minimum, since that alone put me head and shoulders above most. But here's the thing: God couldn't care less about where we are in relation to everyone else. He cares about where we are in relation to Him. His laws. His statutes. His judgments.

Christ told His disciples that no servant is thanked for doing what he is commanded to do, concluding that "likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10).

From Useless to Useful

It's true that when God starts working with us, we're nothing special—but in Malachi 3:17, God says of His followers, "'They shall be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts, 'on the day that I make them My jewels.'"

God intends to make us jewels. In the margin of many New King James Bibles is a note that "jewels" literally means "special treasure"—quite a transformation for a people who were originally

the foolish, weak and base things of the world (1 Corinthians 1:27-28).

Moving Forward

So how do we get from here to there? The answer lies in the parable of the talents (or minas) recorded in both Matthew 25:14-29 and Luke 19:11-27.

A master entrusts three of his servants with varying amounts of money and bids them, "Do business till I come" (Luke 19:13). When the master returns, he finds that only two of his servants have taken his command seriously and increased their funds.

The other, out of laziness or fear, buried his money in the ground. While he had not lost anything, he certainly had not gained anything, either. This servant is cast into outer darkness for being "wicked and lazy" (Matthew 25:26, 29).

Likewise our Master, Jesus Christ, has entrusted us with certain gifts—most notably, God's Holy Spirit. When Christ returns, He expects to find us exercising what we were given to its fullest potential—not leaving it buried in the ground.

We are encouraged to be striving to go above and beyond what we've been given to do. At no point can we afford to become complacent or measure ourselves by any standard but God's.

Right now we may not be considered very special. However, God has entrusted each of us with individual talents that set us apart. If we are willing to develop and use them, we are on our way to becoming God's special treasures.

*Jeremy Lallier
Worcester, Massachusetts, and Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregations*

A Child's Prayer

Our family traditions included giving our children gifts for the Feast of Tabernacles. One year, we presented one of our sons with a brand-new wallet and tucked inside was a crisp, new \$20 bill. His little 4-year-old eyes lit up like we had handed him the whole world. Although it was a child-sized wallet, his little child-sized pockets were just not large enough for it. So he carried it around in his small hands.

Once at our Feast site we had some time to spare and found an arcade. Our son began playing one of the games until it was time to leave for dinner and services. Later, as we sat down to a nice dinner, I noticed our son was beginning to cry. He had left his wallet at the arcade. We didn't have time before services to hunt for it, and the next day would be a Holy Day. We explained to him that we'd have to wait until after sundown to start our search. Although he was upset, he understood. We told him to pray about it, and he prayed harder than I have ever seen him pray.

After his prayer he smiled, no longer upset. He explained that he had prayed about it, and after the Holy Day was over we would go get his wallet. We were amazed at his pure innocent faith. On the other hand, we knew that sometimes God teaches us lessons. We were preparing ourselves in case we had to explain to our son that sometimes God says, "No." In our own reasoning, it was a very busy arcade, the game was popular, and there would be hundreds of people coming and going before we could get back. We knew that the chance of someone else finding the wallet was very great, and we could only hope the person would have the courtesy to turn it in.

The next day, he wanted to know what time we could go to get his wallet. It was as if he thought we would walk into the game room and his wallet would be waiting for him. How could we prepare him for the reality of the situation, without interfering with his faith? We couldn't. We just kept telling him to pray about it, and we prayed as well.

At sundown, you would have found our family walking into that arcade, our son walking on air and his parents, holding their breath. On the floor of that very crowded arcade, beside one of the most popular games, in sight of hundreds of people, was his wallet. Yes, God heard the prayers of a child, and He answered. As his parents, we also realized God used it as a teaching moment, for two adults who lacked the faith of a child.

I have often pictured an angel standing in front of that wallet, his duty being to guard it until a very special child came to collect on an answer to his prayer.

*Sherrie Giddens
St. Louis, Missouri, congregation*

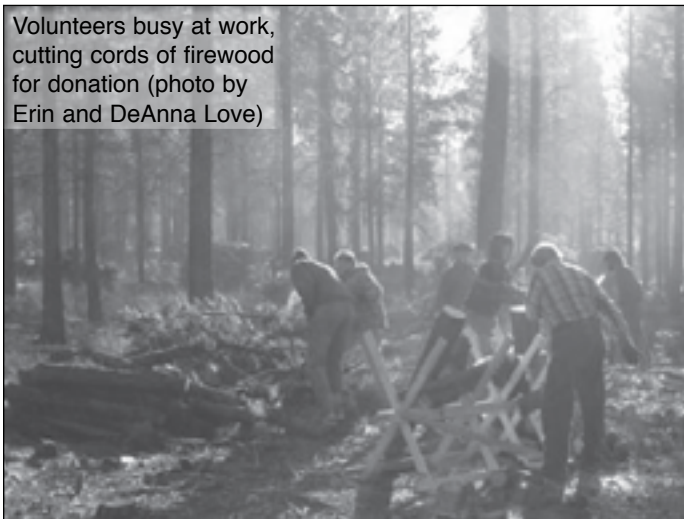


Local Church Updates

Oregon Young Adults Help Cut Firewood for Donation

On Nov. 16, 2008, the Bend, Oregon, congregation, in coordination with young adults from the Eugene, Salem and Portland congregations, organized a service project. Bend pastor Larry Walker

Volunteers busy at work, cutting cords of firewood for donation (photo by Erin and DeAnna Love)



was able to get a special permit to glean firewood from Bureau of Land Management slash piles in La Pine State Park near La Pine, Oregon.

Teams worked together cutting firewood, loading it in wheelbarrows and taking it to waiting trucks. A total of 40 workers—including preteens, teens, young and older adults, and even members with physical disabilities—participated. Rotating shifts allowed people to eat lunch at the Walkers' home nearby, while others continued working.

The original weather forecast called for a high of 34 degrees Fahrenheit and snow. Mr. Walker requested prayers, and the temperature reached a near record high of 59 degrees with sunny skies and no precipitation. Thanks to the very favorable weather conditions, 14 cords of firewood were cut and delivered to needy members of the Bend congregation and the La Pine community in about six and a half hours.

Jason Boise

Carnival Comes to Phoenix

"Step right up, take a chance and win a prize at the carnival!" The Phoenix East, Arizona, congregation had a great night of carnival fun on Nov. 22 after services.

Hamburgers and hot dogs were served hot off the grill, accompanied by all the fixings. After dinner, the real fun began. The children quickly stepped up to examine the games. The adults took a while to get going, but soon the room was filled with chatter and laughter.

Of course, it wouldn't be a carnival without games of skill. Games included "Jacob's Ladder" (a ring toss), "Fill the Ark" (a bean bag toss), "The Great Camel Race" (a dice game), "Rebecca's Tower" (a stringed ball toss), "Plant God's Word" (another tossing game) and a cakewalk.

Each winner received tickets that could be used for a prize drawing that included gift certificates and various items. Children traded their tickets for fun prizes. When not playing, everyone enjoyed popcorn, cookies and beverages.

They also enjoyed face painting, coloring pictures of Joseph in his multicolored coat and custom animal balloons created on the spot.

As testament to the fun everyone was having,



Face painting was one of many fun activities at the carnival (photo by Scott Bradley)

when the time came to end the carnival, nobody wanted to stop the fun!

Lorelei Nettles

Chicago-Style Thanksgiving

The turkey was tender, the treats were tasty, and the tables looked terrific.

After Sabbath services on Nov. 15, 2008, the Chicago congregation enjoyed a Thanksgiving Celebration social. The turkeys were baked and sliced in advance by four very gracious moms in our congregation, and the rest of the attendees pitched in with mostly traditional Thanksgiving side dishes, drinks and desserts. Our church ladies worked together to lay out our lovely feast, which was so professionally presented that one visitor remarked that it appeared to be catered. Several of our children volunteered at the drink table.

Adding to our festive celebration, cylindrical centerpieces covered with

fall pictures and historical Thanksgiving snippets and poems decorated the tables that were adorned with fall colors. Table decorations were completed with fall leaves, confetti and an edible turkey treat. Our pastor, Bob Fahey, happened to sit at the table with the centerpiece describing William Bradford, a leader of the Separatist settlers at Plymouth colony, and commented that he found it very moving.

After dinner the younger set participated in making their own edible turkeys, using candy and

cookies to make the turkeys' bodies, then adding candy corn for the feathers and beaks. It was touching to see several of them take their "turkeys" around to share with other members. Then most of the younger children sped off to the gym for organized relay races, while others simply enjoyed volleyball and basketball. The rest of the attendees remained in the main area to chat, linger over dessert and play pinochle, board games or other card games.

Janet Bratincevic

Member Earns Degree in Holistic Nutrition

Sherry Michaud, a member in Los Angeles, California graduated Sept. 26, 2008, from Clayton College of Natural Health. She received a bachelor



Sherry Michaud

of science degree in holistic nutrition after she graduated from Pasadena City College.

It has been her long-standing desire to help God's people with their health issues relating to diet and exercise.

Sherry states that many thanks go out to the brethren who encouraged and prayed for her. She especially thanks her loving husband, Art, for all of his great support. "Hey, Art! Can you believe it? I finally did it!"

Marion Snyder

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*.



Chicago congregation digs in at the Thanksgiving feast (photos by Patrick Kansa)

Announcements

Births

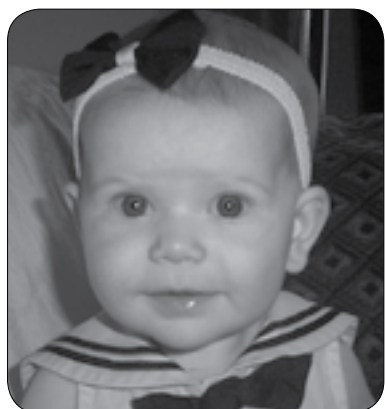
Jonathen and Chancy Arnold of the Roanoke, Virginia, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Olivia Paige Arnold. Olivia



Olivia Paige Arnold

was born on July 9, 2008, weighing 7 pounds 14 ounces, and was 22 inches long. Grandparents are Jesse and Sarah Earles of the Roanoke congregation and Michael and Brenda Arnold of the Bloomington, Illinois, congregation.

Maya Sandra Warren was born on Jan. 15, 2008, in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is the first child of proud parents Ste-



Maya Sandra Warren

phen and Julie Warren. She weighed in at 7 pounds 10 ounces and was 20.5 inches long. The happy family now resides in Jacksonville, Florida.

Grandparents are Reggie and Sandy Warren of Portsmouth, Ohio, and Bill and Barbara Braswell of Modesto, California. Maya has a sweet disposition and gentle personality that has been a joy to watch develop.

Weddings

John and Lynn Fox of the Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation and Mark and Glenda Elliott of the Fort Worth, Texas, congregation are pleased to announce the marriage of their children, Nancy Alexandria Fox and Daniel Mark Elliott. The couple was united in marriage on Sept. 14,



Nancy and Daniel Elliott

2008, in North Salt Lake, Utah. The groom's uncle, John Elliott, pastor of the Phoenix East, Arizona, church performed the ceremony. The bride's mother, Lynn Fox, was the matron of honor; and the groom's cousin, William Fenwick, was the best man. The happy couple resides in the Salt Lake City area and attends the Salt Lake City congregation.

Eustace Ellis (of Jamaica) and Deznah Patricia Ellis (of Toronto, Ontario) are pleased to announce their wed-



Deznah and Eustace Ellis

ding, which took place on Sunday, Oct. 5, 2008, in Toronto. Kandirra Wilson, daughter of the bride, was the maid of honor; and Robert Bethune, cousin of the groom, was the best man. Anthony Wasilkoff, pastor of the Toronto congregation, performed the ceremony. The couple now resides in Toronto.

With deep gratitude for being brought together by God, Michelle



Michelle and Gary Moore

Renee Hall and Gary Lee Moore joined their lives as one on Aug. 8, 2008. With family and friends present, they exchanged vows in a beautiful outdoor ceremony performed by Steve Koon, an elder in the Seattle/Bellevue, Washington, congregation. The bride was attended by her sister, Nanette Hall, and longtime friends, Anne Jule and Sheila Sweet. The groom was attended by good friend, John Petrisor. The ecstatic couple honeymooned in Victoria, British Columbia, and now happily resides in Issaquah, Washington. They attend the Seattle/Bellevue congregation.

Dave and Karen Fergen of Wichita, Kansas, are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter Melissa to Vincent Winner, son of Debra Rogers and Mark and Colleen Winner of Louisville, Kentucky. The wedding, performed by the father of the groom, took place in the 20th Century Center in Wichita on May 25, 2008. Nearly 200 of their friends and family joined them for the ceremony, which was



Vince and Melissa Winner

followed by dinner and a dance. The couple now resides in Overland Park, Kansas, and attends the Kansas City congregation.

Anniversaries

Howard and Betty Willis of the Oakland, California, congregation celebrated 50 years of marriage on Sept. 15, 2008. The Willises were baptized in 1971 and 1972 and still attend services in Oakland. Mr. Willis was ordained a deacon on April 10, 1993.



Howard and Betty Willis

The Willises have four children, Betty, Jonathan, Victoria and Howard Jr., along with eight grandchildren, Jonathan Jr., Cierra, Larry, Tiffany, Angel, Joneshia, Cameron and Elijah.

The congregation was able to surprise the Willises with a potluck celebration and cakes after services on Sept. 20. Family and friends came from far and wide to celebrate their anniversary. The Willises have been and continue to be pillars in the Church serving the brethren faithfully.

On Sept. 23, 1948, Jean Shaw, age 18, and Alfred Russell, age 21, were married in Carrolton, Illinois, in the home of a Baptist minister. Sixty years, eight children, 14 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren later, the Shrewsbury, Missouri, congregation celebrated this union on Sept. 20, 2008. The Russells were presented with a personalized engraved Wendell August commemorative plate and enjoyed



Jean and Alfred Russell

cake and punch among friends and well-wishers.

When asked about factors contributing to their enduring marriage, Jean responded, "If you don't agree, take some time, and think about it. Then talk it out. That's the way problems get solved. And learn to forgive and not hold grudges."

Obituaries

Rose Steier Freyman, 78, of Port St. Lucie, Florida, died Nov. 5, 2008, at Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, Florida.

She was born in Copley, Pennsylvania, and moved to Port St. Lucie 27 years ago. She is survived by her two sons, David and Jimmy; three daughters, Roseann Whitney, Cindy Freyman and Ruth Noll.

She had six grandsons, three great-granddaughters and one great-grandson, as well as a sister and a brother.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 52 years, Dale John James Freyman, her son Dennis and two daughters, Donna and Diane.

She was baptized into the Church in 1970 and attended the Mt. Pocono church with her family for several years until moving to Florida in 1977. She was a member of the Ft. Lauderdale congregation prior to relocating to Port St. Lucie and had been attending the West Palm Beach congregation up until her death.

On Nov. 7, 2008, Bob Vielhaber died at the age of 80. The oldest of three boys, Bob Vielhaber was born and raised in Indiana. He led a remarkable life filled with adventure and experience. After working on a farm as a child and



Bob Vielhaber

attending high school in Indianapolis, he joined the Navy in 1945 and served on the USS *Midway*. After working in Washington, D.C., for a time, Bob and

a friend spent a year panning for gold on a deserted island.

Next, Bob became a truck driver for Mayflower, eventually traveling to every state in the country. At age 30, he married his high school sweetheart, Virginia, a union that lasted 51 years. After five years of marriage, his son, Dan, was born. A year after that, Bob opened his own business, Star Foods Inc. His daughter, Julie, was born in 1970, the same year he became a member of the Worldwide Church of God. Bob later began a second business, Star Lock Service. Eventually, he sold both businesses, learned the heating and cooling trade, and worked at Peine Engineering until he retired.

Bob was artistic and enjoyed both drawing and painting. He had a sharp eye for detail and took pleasure in drafting designs for his various projects. He was a faithful member of God's Church until his death. He loved attending services and took every opportunity to help those experiencing hard times. He left a fine legacy and will be greatly missed by his family and the Indianapolis congregation.

Ruby Lea Sanders, 92, died on Dec. 2, 2008, at the home of her daughter and son-in-law in San Antonio, Texas.

Edward Bee "Bud" Sanders, her husband of 61 years, preceded Mrs. Sanders in death. She is survived by three daughters and one son-in-law,



Ruby Lea Sanders

Billie Sue McNair and her husband Burk, Bobbie Stojanek and Nancy Bald.

She had seven grandchildren, Kerry McNair, Karen Sue Weaver, Mark McNair, Dana Morgan, Cynthia DeBusk, Ann Dudley and James Bald. She had 12 great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren.

Ruby's husband, Bud, began listening to Herbert W. Armstrong on the radio in the late 1940s. The Sanders' first church service was in Big Sandy, Texas, in 1953. When the church began in Corpus Christi in July 1954, they were baptized shortly thereafter and attended there for 20 years until the church began in Victoria in 1974. Bud was a deacon and Ruby was a deaconess.

James "Bo" Leslie Barnes was born Nov. 24, 1922, in Cairo, Illinois, the son of Brady Everett Barnes and Ida Mae (Childers) Barnes. He died Aug. 2, 2008, in Birch Tree, Missouri, at the age of 85.

He was united in marriage to Violet LaBoube on March 27, 1943, at Overland, Missouri. Later he was married

to Eloise J. Spurgeon on Dec. 7, 1951, in St. Charles, Missouri.

Bo lived in the St. Louis area, working at Crater Carburetor as a carburetor specialist from 1940 until 1950. After he met and married Eloise, they moved to Eminence, Missouri. They enjoyed traveling together from 1951 until 1958, performing shows with their trained mule, horse and dogs.

Bo also performed roping as a rodeo clown during that time, a job that he enjoyed and always recalled with fond memories. Bo and Eloise relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, where he worked on highway and road construction. He worked his way up to a foreman and later became the superintendent. In 1962, Bo and Eloise moved back to Eminence. Bo was very much an outdoors person. He loved to fish and hunt, and he had a great sense of humor.

Bo was preceded in death by his parents, a sister, Mary (Barnes) Ochs, and a stepson, Donald Goforth. He is survived by three daughters, Juritta Thoele, Sandy Novak and Rochelle Poyner and her husband Johnny; one son, Steve Wuesting and his wife, Jenny; four grandchildren, Shannon Thoele, Ashley Lorenz, Kimberly Burgess and her husband Christopher, and Laura Hummel; and two great-grandchildren, Gage and Jordan Hummel.

Bo was a member of God's Church for many years and attended the congregation in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, until health no longer permitted.

Hector Joseph Roybal, 54, of the Los Angeles, California, congregation, died Feb. 16, 2008, at his home in Azusa, California, after a valiant 2½-year battle with colon cancer. Hector was born on April 25, 1953, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to José Juvencio Roybal and Irene Herrera Roybal.

In 1968, the family moved to Monterrey, Mexico, where Hector finished high school and studied architecture for two years at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey. While in Mexico, Hector began listening to the *World Tomorrow* broadcast, and came to Ambassador College in Pasadena, graduating in 1977. Fluent in Spanish, he worked for the Spanish Department for several years. He married Sharon Schofield in 1981, and they were



Hector Joseph Roybal

blessed with three children: Jonathan, Katelyn and Caroline.

A natural salesman, Hector had a long career in sales and marketing. While at Ambassador College, he sold over 1,000 Rose Parade programs in 24 hours, a record that still stands today.

Hector had many interests including architecture, music, world travel, history, chess, reading, cooking, collecting art and participating in triathlons. He was a member of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses for many years, volunteering behind the scenes for the annual Rose Parade. He served as a deacon in the Los Angeles congregation of United Church of God, loved working on the church's Rose Parade fundraiser and also did simultaneous translations into Spanish.

Hector is survived by his wife, Sharon; son, Jonathan; daughters, Katelyn and Caroline; mother, Irene Roybal; brother, Larry Roybal (wife Blanca); sister, Maricela Delgado (husband Andre); and several nieces and nephews. Memorial services were held on Feb. 24, 2008, in Eagle Rock, California, and were conducted by Los Angeles pastor and friend Larry Greider.

Lela Ellen Miller, 103, of Sedgwick, Arkansas, died Friday, Sept. 28, 2007, in Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas.

She was born July 8, 1904, in Crossett, Arkansas, the daughter of the late Thomas and Sally Farah Maxwell.



Lela Ellen Miller

She was united in marriage to Ossie Buel Miller on Oct. 11, 1921, in Crossett. He preceded her in death on Aug. 17, 1990.

Mrs. Miller was a homemaker and member of the United Church of God congregation in Sedgwick. She had been a baptized member of God's Church for over 40 years.

Mrs. Miller loved her family very much and especially enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and sewing for them. She was a good neighbor and often cooked for those who were in need. Her hobbies were crafts, quilting, gardening and cooking.

Survivors include three daughters, Aleeta Dame, Reba Berry and Marie Manus (and her husband Harold); three grandchildren, Betty Dame Petty, Buel Dame and Dennis Manus; six great-grandchildren; 14 great-great-grandchildren; one great-great-great-grandchild, Drake Nash; and many nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Funeral services were held Sunday, Oct. 7, in Walnut Ridge with Rick Beam officiating.

James "Robert" Ice, 97, of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, died on March 27, 2008, at the Cedargate Nursing Home.



James "Robert" Ice

Mr. Ice was born Oct. 19, 1910, in Campbell, Missouri. He had been a farmer and enjoyed a mutual love affair with his family. As a young man, he enjoyed fox hunting and was able to play his guitar in his early 90s.

Mr. Ice was a member of the United Church of God congregation in Poplar Bluff. He was baptized on March 3, 1965. On Feb. 6, 1931, he married Addie Hicks in Piggott, Arkansas. She preceded him in death in July 2006.

Survivors include three sons, Robert A. Ice, James G. Ice and Ronald J. Ice; one daughter, Karen Jones; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. Mr. and Mrs. Ice were preceded in death by their eldest daughter, Bernice Ray.

What a privilege to serve God alongside someone as kind and enjoyable to be around as Mr. Ice! There were no senior moments for Mr. Ice; his mind and memory were keen to the day of his death. Mr. Ice was a lovely, special man, who knew his Bible and his God.

A graveside service was conducted by Carl Hoffman, an elder in the Cape Girardeau congregation.

Dr. Marlin Gilbert Kime, 64, of Fulton, Missouri, died Friday, July 11, 2008, at his home. He was born Feb. 3, 1944, in Nehawka, Nebraska, the son of the late Gilbert and Lenna (McReynolds) Kime. On March 21, 1975, he married Elaine Smith. She survives at their home. He is also survived by a son, Michael Kime; foster children, Todd Anderson, Michael Radcliffe, Justin Seaburg, Lindsey Morris, Justin Arensholds and David Palmer.

Dr. Kime had a Ph.D. in history and a B.A. in psychology. He taught at the University of Nebraska, Omaha and Lincoln, and at Texas A&M. A published author, he wrote articles for *Nebraska Trucker*, *The Southern Historian* and *People, Places and Things*. He also wrote two books, *The Lost 13th Tribe* and *America in Prophecy*. He was baptized on Sept. 28, 1967.

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 *United News*.

News At a Glance

Continued from page 2

Revised Camp Dates

A few changes have been made to our United Youth Camp schedule. The following are the correct dates for the upcoming year:

Pinecrest, Missouri, June 25 to July 2, 2009 (staff, June 24).

Woodmen, Alabama, June 28 to July 5, 2009 (staff, June 27).

Carter, Texas, July 5 to 12, 2009 (staff, July 4).

Hye Sierra, California, July 5 to 12, 2009 (staff, July 3).

Davidson, Oregon, Aug. 2 to 9, 2009 (staff, Aug. 1).

Heritage, Pennsylvania, Aug. 9 to 16, 2009 (staff, Aug. 8).

Winter Camp, Wisconsin, Dec. 28, 2009, to Jan. 3, 2010 (staff, Dec. 27).

Camp Hye Sierra is also offering a Challenger-level extended session of backcountry camping, caving and canyoneering in the Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Forest for a limited number of interested campers from July 12 to 15.

Big Sandy Congregation Transfers Building Assets to UCG

The local Big Sandy, Texas, congregation transferred ownership of the recently completed church building to United Church of God, an International Association. The appraised value of the church building is \$1,250,000 and the loan amount is \$350,000.

As permanent financing options were explored, it was decided to transfer ownership now in accordance with the building policy. The policy

was adopted by the Council of Elders in 2001 and states the following: "In order to ensure that local church assets are protected, all approved local church buildings must be held in the name of the United Church of God, an International Association, the religious nonprofit corporation (UCGIA)."

2009 Feast Video Theme Announced

On Dec. 18, Clyde Kilough presented the proposal for the next Feast video to the Council of Elders. Since we centered on the heritage of the Church this past year, this year's video will focus on what we are currently doing in the Church in these modern times.

The video will include the current work and activities that the Church is involved in now and also segments of the work being done around the world.

Six-Week Pastoral Program Ready to Begin

Starting Jan. 20, the first of three pastoral training sessions will take place at the home office. During this session, the program will focus on how to pastor a congregation more effectively.

Topics will include the importance of character and integrity in the ministry, pastoral principles from Timothy and Titus, the fine art of delegating and mentoring, intervention and mediation, Church history and more. Four newly hired ministers will be among those attending the pastoral training program.

The next session will begin at the end of March.

Winter Dance Weekend, Feb. 6-8

The Cincinnati, Ohio, East congregation will once again host the



What's New on the Web?

■ New Daily Video GN Commentary.

Watch new video commentaries posted to ucg.org, the GN magazine site and YouTube. Some recent topics include:

"Christmas Controversy," "Good Government," "Equal Opportunity Corruption," "Give Peace a Chance," "Pirates," "Financial Slavery," "If the Shoe Fits..." "Natalee Holloway and Modern Slavery," "Do Bad, Be Good?" "Madoff With \$50 Billion" and "What Has Happened to Us?" www.gnmagazine.org



■ UCG on Twitter.

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



Winter Dance Weekend on Feb. 6 to 8. We will have a Bible study and dessert social on Friday evening and a dance Saturday night. A group activity will be planned for those interested on Sunday morning. For more information, please contact Amy Stephens at cincywd@fuse.net.

Phoenix Women's Weekend, March 14-15

The Phoenix, Arizona, East congregation is pleased to announce the upcoming 2009 Women's Weekend. During times of personal and economic stress, we might tend toward self-preservation. Yet this is the time to be "Loving in Deed," which is our theme, based on 1 John 3:16-18.

Mark your calendars for March 14 to 15 for an inspiring weekend promoting deeds of godliness. Our keynote speaker will be Beverly Kubik with guest speakers from around the region.

We will be conducting a silent auction with proceeds benefiting Good Works and LifeNets projects. Donated items are requested. For

more information about the weekend, visit the Phoenix local Web site www.ucgphoenix.org or send an e-mail to ucgazww@hotmail.com. The deadline for registration is Feb. 25.

ABC Continuing Education Seminar Scheduled for June

One of our most popular Continuing Education activities has been the annual five-day seminar at the home office. Last year we were unable to hold the seminar because of the short interval between the end of the seven-month ABC program and the beginning of the new nine-month program. We are thankful that we can once again offer the five-day seminar this summer to those who are interested.

This year's seminar will be held at the home office from June 8 to 12. We should be able to accommodate approximately 50 people.

Details concerning costs and subjects will be provided soon. Those who would like to receive e-mail information may contact the Continuing Education coordinator at david_johnson@ucg.org.

Calendar of Events

Jan. 16-18: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Southern California area (Garden Grove), www.ucg-gg.org.

Jan. 17-19: Salt Lake City Ski Weekend, www.ucg-slc.org/skiweekend.php.

Jan. 20-29: Pastoral training class.

Feb. 6-8: Winter 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. 13-16: Presidents' Day Family Weekend, Branson, Missouri, mike_blackwell@ucg.org.

Feb. 24-26: Council of Elders meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio.

March 14: Wooster, Ohio, Regional Family Day.

March 14-15: Phoenix, Arizona, Women's Weekend, ucgazww@hotmail.com.

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

April 5-16: Israel Educational Spring Holy Day Tour, (800) 858-6999.

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

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

United Youth Corps Applications Due Jan. 15

The United Youth Corps program offers opportunities for Christian service, leadership training and travel for our young adults in the Church. After 10 years of United Youth Corps projects, nearly 80 young adults have made a positive difference in the world, participating in 23 projects in eight countries.

We are thrilled to announce that we are now accepting applications for this year's programs in:

- **Philippines:** May 10-24.
- **Zambia:** June.
- **Ghana:** Aug. 6-20.
- **Nigeria:** Aug. 11-27.
- **Kenya:** Dec. 10-24.

United Youth Corps international projects may not be for everyone, but if the thought of serving the Church through challenging international adventures sounds like your cup of tea, then visit the United Youth Corps Web site at www.ucgyouthcorps.org to download the project fact sheet and application for any of the projects listed.

The deadline for applications to the projects in the Philippines, Nigeria, Zambia and Ghana is Jan. 15.



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