

# UNITED NEWS



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MAY-JUNE 2015

## Meet the New UCG.org

by Tom Disher

The Internet team at United Church of God launched the new, improved UCG.org website Sunday, April 19. The relaunch was a months-long project that involved looking at all the efforts of United Church of God in its 20 years and evaluating how best to promote and organize each one. It was a total ground-up software upgrade on the server side, with a new design to complement it on the user's side. The site now is divided into two major sections—United Church of God and *Beyond Today*. Read on for a short explanation of the rationale behind the changes to the site and a brief tutorial on how best to use it on page 2.



### Why a New Website?

The Internet is constantly shifting in capabilities, browsing habits and tons of other factors. We like to stay as current as we can—so that we're ready to give an answer when people are searching for God's truths. Namely, we needed to

make sure our site was usable for someone browsing it on a mobile device, which is about half of those who visit our site. But we didn't want just a face-lift, so we've thought long and hard about the best way to organize the new site, what it should look like, and how it will function. We wanted a change that can be expanded and improved upon for years to come—

with a strong software foundation and thoughtful organization.

### What's New on the Site?

#### 1. New, mobile-friendly responsive design

We've redesigned the site from the ground up to make it more accessible on your smartphone, tablet, television or any

other device that you use. A responsive design means the site dynamically shifts its layout for whatever size screen you are using at that moment. As mentioned, more than 50 percent of our traffic is from mobile phones and tablets now, so it is important to us that it's as easy to use the site to find our material on a mobile device as it is for someone on a traditional desktop PC.

#### 2. More deliberate focus on presenting who we are as a Church

For years the Web strategy was to put as much content on your homepage for search engines to find. With advances from search engines this isn't the case anymore. For that reason, and also in an effort to most logically present who we

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## 2015 General Conference of Elders



by Milan Bizic

Cincinnati, Ohio—Council of Elders chairman Robin Webber called the 20th anniversary meeting of the General Conference of Elders (GCE) to session Sunday, May 3. The theme of the conference—“Labor in the Word”—guided the presen-

tations, workshops and discussions and even the split sermons on the Sabbath the day before. Balloting took place Sunday morning, resulting in approval of the 2015 Strategic Plan, Operation Plan, and Budget, various amendments, and the selection of four Council seats. Opera-

tion managers Roy Holladay (Ministerial and Member Services), Peter Eddington (Media and Communication Services) and Rick Shabi (Financial Services) gave updates on the work of the Church in those areas, as did president Victor Kubik on the overall direction of the administration. Donald Ward gave the keynote address, reiterating the importance of clinging to our understanding of the doctrinal “trunk of the tree.”

Below is a brief summary of the proceedings of the conference.

### Recognition of Employees, Retired Ministry and New Elders

Victor Kubik led a recognition of Church retirees and employees who have reached significant employment anniversaries. Retirees are Steve and Evelyn Shaffer and Noel and Becky Hornor. Those

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### Ambassador Bible Center Becomes Ambassador Bible College

During this ABC school year, Ambassador Bible Center became Ambassador Bible College.

Dr. Frank Dunkle, who is an Amba-

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The new Ambassador Bible College seal. From left: Richard Kennebeck (building manager), Tim Sipes (warehouse manager), Frank Dunkle (new ABC coordinator), Gary Antion (retiring ABC coordinator).



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#### BY THE NUMBERS

276%

Increase in number of people clicking the congregations link on the new UCG.org

# Meet the New UCG.org

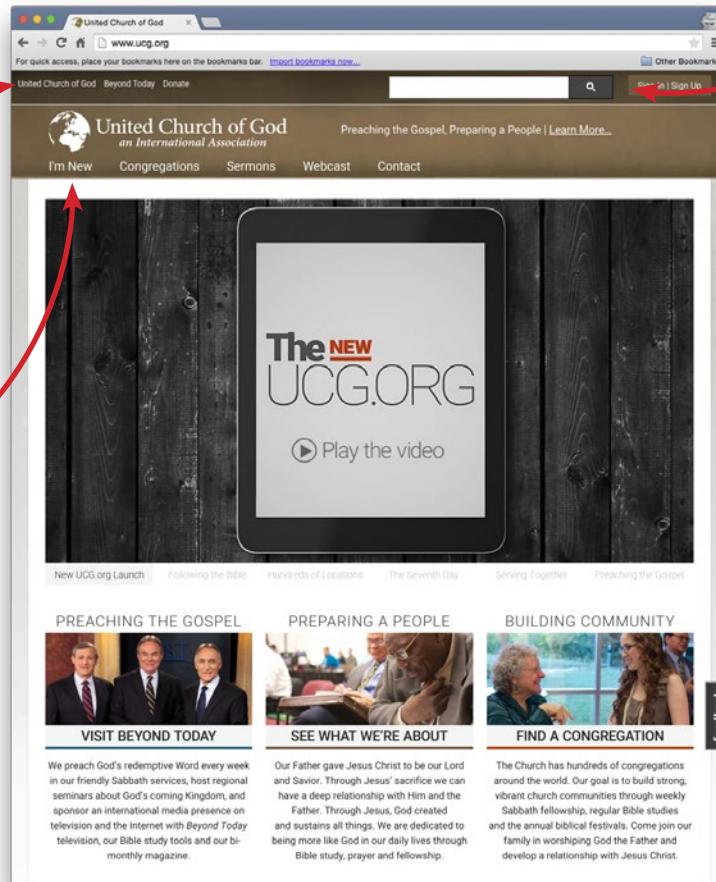
## Two Major Sections

**Beyond Today:** Media outreach (booklets, videos, articles, issue archives, blogs, etc.)

**United Church of God:** Information about the Church (basic introduction, find a congregation, sermons, contact form, weekly webcast)

## I'm New Page

Gives a short introduction to us as a church, including what we believe, what to expect if someone were to come to services, links to resources for study, and a brief history of our organization.



## Search

Looking for something but not sure where it is? Searching is always the easiest way to find something.

## What We're About

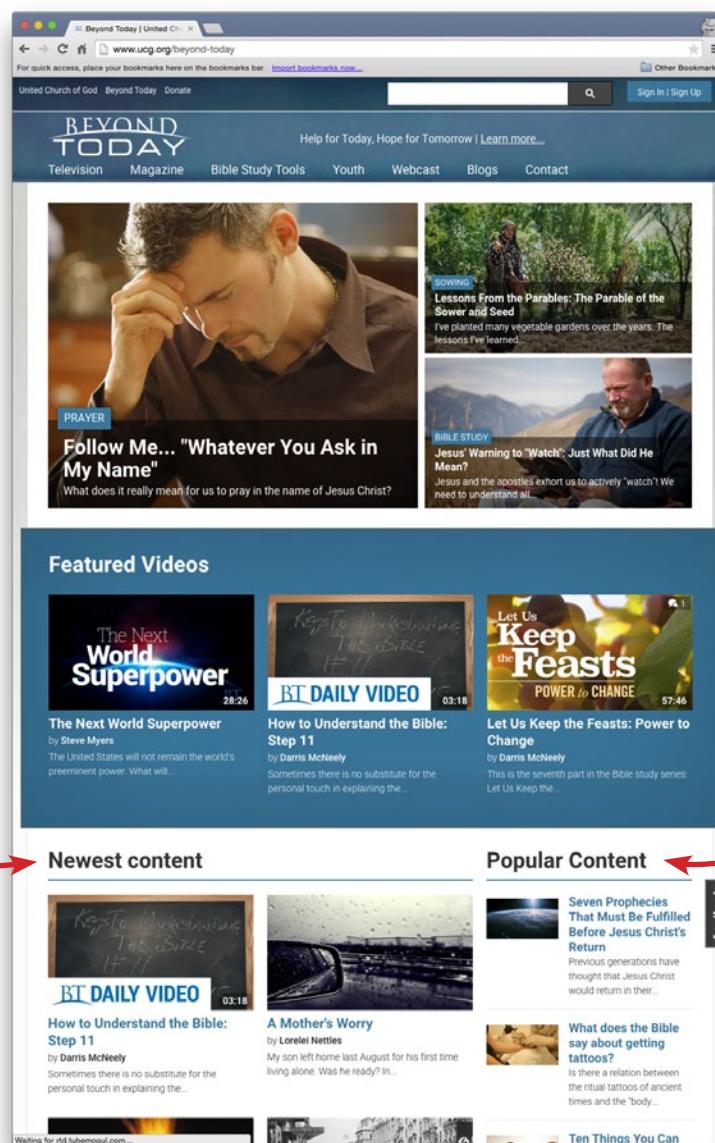
A brief explanation of what we are all about, with links to where to learn more.

## Featured Content

Articles, videos, blogs—whatever we choose to highlight at any given time.

## Newest Content

Content will appear here as it is published in order of published date.



## Sign up for an account

Signing up for an account allows you to save articles in your study list.

## Popular Content

Content that people are looking at on the site, no matter how old. This allows for older material to bubble up from the archives and have a new life for a new audience.



**RICK SHABI**  
Financial Services  
Operation Manager

We just finished tax season in the United States, and the General Conference of Elders just convened in Cincinnati. Among many items discussed at the GCE is the annual Strategic Plan and Budget. These had been presented in detail and recommended for approval by the Council of Elders during the February meetings.

For many, taxes and budgets are “painful” experiences that they just endure. Both can be tedious, time-consuming processes, but both can be meaningful and valuable exercises when we understand and appreciate the spiritual reminders that are inherent in the process.

There are those who have said that there is a fundamental connection between our spiritual lives and how we think about and handle money. God expects us to be wise stewards, and that includes planning the use of the money He provides for us (budgeting) and honestly paying the taxes we owe. “The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5).

God is a planner, and He has a plan for your life. He knows exactly what each of us needs spiritually, mentally, physically and financially to become the people He wants us to become. And He expects us to use—and plan to use—what He gives us. That includes planning financially, so that we become better Christians and

examples of His way of life. Remember the lessons from the parable of the talents?

### Analogies to Everyday Life

Budgeting and planning help us to prioritize our expenditures and live within our means. We learn to put first things first: God, housing, food, transportation, clothing, and the other necessities of life. Then, there may be extra funds we can use for other comforts and luxuries. When we budget wisely, we appreciate why God gives us the income He does, and we learn an important spiritual principle. “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have” (Hebrews 13:5).

Budgeting also helps us review and examine the past. What worked? What didn't? Is this something we should continue, or is there another direction we should go? Did we plan adequately? What needs to improve? What needs to change so we become better stewards and users of what God provides?

We have just come through the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, a time when we examine ourselves and ask God to search our hearts “to see if there is any wicked way in me” (Psalm 139:23). How do we measure up to the standard that is Christ? Is there waste in our lives that needs to be discarded? Do we need to build into our personal budgets an investment of more time spent in service to God and others?

It takes a lot of time and work to go through the detail of our personal lives or that of an organization to understand why things are done the way they are. Some things have just been “done that

way” for years and years. But is it the best way or best use of funds?

Sometimes in the budget process when such questions are asked, some people feel like you are “stepping on their toes,” so to speak. But remember that the process of budgeting and planning is done to make the family or organization better, just like self-examination is done for the purpose of improving us. Examination can be tough, and sometimes we need others to show what might be an area of improvement for us—always keeping the goal of the Kingdom of God in mind. “Iron sharpens iron,” the Bible says. How do we react when someone “steps on our toes,” and asks “why?”

There are so many other comparisons and analogies that I could address, but I think you get the point. Appreciating the budgeting process (not rushing through it or avoiding it altogether) can teach us many lessons beyond the amounts we are allocating in each area.

### It's a Good Feeling

When your taxes are done, it's a good feeling, especially if you have planned well enough that you don't have a huge tax bill at the end of the year. It's a good feeling, too, when you have taken the time to diligently plan your finances. Having a balanced budget that reflects the thought, examination, planning, and submission to God's will makes the effort and time spent worthwhile.

One of my favorite verses has become 2 Chronicles 26:5: “As long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.” How true that is in all aspects of our daily lives. **UN**

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**UCGIA Council of Elders:** Scott Ashley, Bill Bradford, Roc Corbett, Aaron Dean, John Elliott, Mark Mickelson, Rainer Salomaa, Mario Seiglie, Rex Sexton, Donald Ward, Anthony Wasilkoff, Robin Webber

**President:** Victor Kubik

**Media and Communications Services Manager:** Peter Eddington

**Managing Editor:** Mitchell Moss

**Copy Editor:** Milan Bizic **Editorial Intern:** Allison Montero

**Doctrinal reviewers:** Arthur Suckling, Chuck Zimmerman, Gerald Seelig

**Web-first article doctrinal team:** Gerald Seelig, Arthur Suckling, John LaBissoniere, Chris Rowland

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### International addresses:

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

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

**BENELUX countries** (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands.

**BRITISH ISLES:** United Church of God—British Isles, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

**CANADA:** United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

**CAMEROON:** United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Bessengue, Douala Cameroon.

**OTHER FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS:** Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France.

**CARIBBEAN:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

**EAST AFRICA** (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

**GERMANY:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

**ITALY:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035 4523573. E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

**MALAWI:** P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. Phone: +265 999 823 523. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

**NEW ZEALAND:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

**NIGERIA:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 803-323-3193. E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

**PHILIPPINES:** Philippines. P.O. Box 4774, MCPO, 1287 Makati City, Philippines. Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444. Website: www.ucg.org.ph. E-mail: info@ucg.org.ph

**SCANDINAVIA:** Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 U.S.A. E-mail: norden@ucg.org

**SINGAPORE:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia.

**SOUTH AFRICA** (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 1181 Tzaneen 0850. Phone: (+27) 0797259453. E-Mail: RSA@ucg.org

**SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS:** Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

**TONGA:** United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

**SWITZERLAND:** Phone: 49 228 945 4636. Website: http://www.vkg.org

**ALL OTHER SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONS NOT LISTED:** United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia

**ZAMBIA:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (0026)0966925840. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

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

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## From The COUNCIL

# Ecumenicalism: Is it God's Way?



by Carmelo Anastasi

Jessica, the very young daughter of a friend of mine, asked her father: “Dad, why don't we celebrate Christmas?” Her father answered: “Jesus was not born on Dec. 25.

God wants us to celebrate only His holy days instead, like the Feast of Tabernacles.” The little girl replied: “But Christmas is everyone's feast, would it not be nicer to celebrate both Christmas and the Feast of Tabernacles?” Her father smiled.

We too can smile to such a reply. But that little girl had unconsciously expressed an ecumenical desire. What's wrong with ecumenical desires or approaches? Let's face it, the ecumenical approach casts its attractive spell on many adults too; as a matter of fact an increasing number of people, even those with some biblical knowledge, are being attracted by it. Its spirit is spreading everywhere. Most ecumenical supporters are sincere in believing ecumenicalism is what God wants. But is that true? To be sincere and at the same time in error is certainly possible. Therefore, any true believer needs to be enriched by the knowledge

of God's Word—the Bible—otherwise his or her sincerity serves no good cause.

### Ecumenicalism: What Is it Exactly?

The word “ecumenicalism” derives from ancient latin *ecumène*, meaning “a place where different people lived together.” In modern times the word *ecumène* indicates “minimum conditions for living together.” That is, upholding a common belief in the immortality of the soul, the Trinitarian concept, Sunday as the day of the Lord, etc.

In practice ecumenicalism is an inter-religious movement involving many different churches claiming to work together in order to overcome their organizational divisions and other doctrinal differences at the expense of the biblical truth. Their motto is “unity in diversity.” But the question is: Can there be real unity in diversi-

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# Media and Communications Services Announces Five Job Openings

Human resources has announced the following employment opportunities at the United Church of God in Media and Communication services:

## Associate Editor, Internal Publications

The United Church of God has announced an opening for an associate editor for internal publications.

The associate editor's primary responsibilities will be to copy edit and lay out *United News*, as well as the *Festival Planning Brochure*, the *United Youth Camps Magazine*, the *Festival Activity Brochure* and Ambassador Bible College publications.

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) and one to two years' direct related experience is preferred, with training in communication and in using desktop publishing (Adobe InDesign) and photo editing (Photoshop) software. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a portfolio of their work.

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God.

For more information about the position, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org).

## Assistant Video Editor

The United Church of God has announced an opening for an assistant video editor. The assistant editor will be responsible for internal video projects including:

- Sermon videos
- Ministerial training videos
- Educational videos
- Any other projects that would be assigned by the supervisor

The assistant video editor will also work on closed captioning for *Beyond Today* as well as operate cameras for Bible studies and the *Beyond Today* television program. Working closely with a team in a creative environment is essential. Knowledge of video editing software (e.g. Adobe Premier Pro) and in using photo editing

(Photoshop) software is required, along with storytelling skills and an eye for detail.

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) and one to two years' direct related experience is preferred, with training in communication. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a portfolio of their work.

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## Illustrator/Graphic Designer

The United Church of God has announced an opening for an illustrator

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# Challenger East 2015 Details Announced

The Challenger East program seeks a small but dedicated group of young adults who are ready to take to the woods of early America's heartland Aug. 4-9, 2015. Challenger is a wilderness-based adventure focusing on leadership mentoring for young adults in the Church age 18 and older.

Set in the Appalachians of Northeast Ohio at Little Beaver Creek State Park, the six-day camp challenges participants with an eclectic variety of off-the-grid, wilderness skill-building experiences:

- Stick and stone tool basics, including flint-knapping
- Flora and fauna identification
- Primitive archery
- Fly-fishing and fly tying
- Pioneer campfire-building skills
- Camp cookery

Participants will experience intriguing tasks of pioneering societies like early America's pathfinders and pioneers. However, the core curriculum focuses on their role as spiritual pathfinders and pioneers.

The theme of Challenger East this year is "Back to the Basics of Truth," which will

include the following topics:

- Core elements of God's truth
- Your leadership role as a pioneer of truth
- Dealing with the dangers of a spiritual wilderness
- The hierarchy of truth and wisdom
- Wise as a serpent—harmless as a dove

The program's capstone is to teach wise, spiritual leadership from God's Word. This entails a study of the biblical wisdom of David, Solomon and especially Jesus Christ. David focused on the wisdom of God's law (Psalm 119). Solomon drew insight from his keen knowledge of the creation: "He spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish" (1 Kings 4:33). As Creator, Christ taught pure, spiritual wisdom from His own handiwork: "Look at the birds of the air,

for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).

By focusing on wisdom-building from God's truth in His Word, His up-close creation and from lessons of practical skills, Challenger East equips participants to more clearly understand God's truth and thus better serve Him, His people and the gospel of His soon coming Kingdom.

Applications are available from Challenger East director Randy Stiver at [randy\\_stiver@ucg.org](mailto:randy_stiver@ucg.org). **UN**



Continued from page 4

sador College grad and has a doctoral degree from Texas A&M, will become the new coordinator for ABC. He is already beginning to take on more classes and is learning the administrative side of the job. He and I meet each Friday for an hour and go over various aspects of my job, which will conclude at the end of June. I will be retired and hope to do some writing and limited teaching as needed. Dr. Dunkle is younger and will be able to bring new ideas and plans for ABC.

What does the change in name mean? The name change was decided because Ambassador Bible Center was always designed to be a college-level educational institution. However, some "centers" are involved in more than education. When some international students stated they wanted a visa to come to a "center," they were not so welcomed by the immigration official since potential work could have been involved. So the change in name to "college" more clearly describes what students come for: to learn and study God's Word and related topics.

ABC went through a thorough assessment, including a questionnaire sent to all graduates, who largely reported that ABC did fulfill what it was tasked with doing: to transmit the Word of God to them in a thorough manner. The assessment done by the education committee of the Council of Elders encouraged the ABC administration and instructors to do more to highlight service and leadership. We will be working more diligently to implement the recommendations that the committee recommended.

The change in the name does not mean expansion of the program or a more costly version of what has been in existence for 16 years and has seen nearly 600 students attend.

Please pray for the transition to be smooth and the program to continue to be a success for Dr. Dunkle.

Gary Antion

## Beyond Today Moving to Word Network

We are pleased to announce that we are pursuing a better option for our television air times for *Beyond Today*.

When ION Television reduced its Sunday morning availability for religious

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# Honoring Retiring Ministry

## Noel and Becky Hornor



internationally for the Feast and visiting Israel in 2010.

Noel was a senior writer for *The Good News* and has contributed to numerous booklets since 1996. When reflecting back on his written contributions Noel shared: “Over the years I’ve gained great satisfaction from developing a subject from a

germ of an idea into a finished sermon, article or booklet, and in knowing that people have been positively impacted by it. One comment I’ve received most consistently from members is that they consider me a good teacher. This is something I value very much.” Noel was also a member of the personal correspondence team and participated in the United Youth Camps program for nine years leading hiking and ropes course programs.

Becky considers the opportunity to serve alongside her husband in the ministry the “best job in the world.” When

reflecting back on their years in the ministry Becky had the following thoughts: “I shared with my husband the joy of watching people grow and develop toward conversion or a deeper relationship with God in all of the congregations we’ve served. These same people became a part of our family and we treasure every one of them. Our time in the ministry has been so incredibly satisfying and a series of adventures that have brought showers of blessings for us and our family. We are very thankful to God for these opportunities to serve and to all the people that allowed us to become a part of their lives.”

This past February Noel and Becky celebrated their 40th anniversary. They have two children and four grandchildren who live in Dallas, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. With God’s blessing they hope spend extra time visiting their family and planning the occasional special “vacation” together. In fact this summer they hope to accompany their daughter and her family on a trip to Disney, and plan on spending the upcoming Feast with their son in Sevierville. The Hornors also enjoy taking walks and hiking, any travel opportunities, reading and history.

Lisa Fenchel

Noel and Becky Hornor retired after 45 years in the full-time employ of the ministry. Noel was ordained on May 22, 1972, while serving the Sacramento, California, and Reno, Nevada, church areas. Throughout their years in the ministry Noel and Becky pastored congregations in California, Nevada, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Oregon. Some of the highlights have been the relationships shared with God’s people, and the opportunity to visit prospective members and watch them grow towards conversion. Wonderful memories were also formed traveling

## Steve and Evelyn Shafer

Steve and Evelyn Shafer retired from the full time employee of the ministry on May 1, 2015, as pastor of the Bellevue and Sedro Woolley Washington congregations.

Steve was ordained on the Day of Atonement on Sept. 22, 1977. During their 32 years in the employed ministry they served congregations in both Michigan and Washington. Over the years they have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know people from all walks of life and being a part of their spiritual journey to God’s Kingdom. Special memories have been made attending many church socials and campouts, along with the travel opportunities afforded to them during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Steve also served on the member’s appeal committee for three years, in various responsibilities during the Feast of Tabernacles and was part of the personal correspondence team for several years.

When asked to reflect back on their years in the ministry, Steve and Evelyn had the following thoughts and advice to share:

Steve: “It is great to be a part of God’s family and to have been a small part of so many peoples’ lives. I have learned to not

judge by outward appearances, and why God judges our hearts. Some whom I thought were deeply committed were not, and others whom I questioned proved to be deeply committed. My advice: Don’t judge by outward appearances. Allow people time to display their own fruits. As Christ said, you shall know them by their fruits.”

Evelyn: “When we went to work for the Church in 1982, Denny Luker gave us all the new p.m. visits and asked us to visit all the widows and spiritual widows. It was exciting answering questions for the new prospective members. We enjoyed visiting the elderly the most, as they had been faithful for many years, having gone through many trials. Our most memorable experiences have been getting to know brethren from far-away places during the Feast of Tabernacles. The brethren in Kenya were so warm and friendly and eager to learn. They were also very poor by American standards but filled with the love of God. My



advice: Love people; love the brethren. No opportunity is more rewarding than that.”

Steve and Evelyn have been married for 47 years and have three children and 10 grandchildren. They both enjoy traveling, reading about history and spending time outdoors, whether it’s gardening, camping, skiing or swimming. Upon retirement they plan to move back to their home in Michigan—where they will be closer to their children and grandchildren—and to visit their extended families in Arkansas and Mississippi.

Lisa Fenchel

## news AT A GLANCE

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programming at the end of last year, we were forced to choose a weekday morning for *Beyond Today*, and we began airing on Friday mornings. While response has been improving over time, the Friday morning audience has not worked out as well as we desired. Therefore effective May 29, we have cancelled our contract with ION and signed a new agreement with a familiar network of the past: the Word Network.

Beginning April 24, we now air twice per week: Friday afternoon at 4 p.m. Eastern, followed by Saturday evening at 6:30 p.m. Eastern beginning April 24 and 25! In addition, these times translate very well for our U.K., Europe and Africa audiences—which is later in the evening for them.

### Word Network’s Reach

The Word Network is available in more than 200 countries reaching millions of viewers in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. It reaches 86 million homes in the U.S. alone through DirecTV, Comcast, Time Warner Cable, Bright House Networks, Cox, Cablevision, Charter, and a host of other cable operators—and another 9 million homes on Sky TV in the U.K.

The Word Network is also provided to one million men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces in over 65 countries. And it just expanded its reach to Latin America.

Word’s website streams all programming live, and is also available to thousands of air travelers daily through “In Flight” services on selected airlines.

### New Streaming Opportunities

As a result of moving to the Word Network, we will be spending less of our airtime budget, and so for the 2015-2016 fiscal year we are going to use a portion of it to develop and put *Beyond Today* on various streaming platforms and set-top television boxes to bring our video program before even more viewers.

The airtime mix will be expanded—the usual traditional broadcast/cable/satellite TV—plus new, innovative streaming devices. Our airtime budget will therefore be split into two main categories—traditional broadcast/cable/satellite airtime and newer streaming “airtime” technologies—both of which have the goal to deliver our *Beyond Today* program to additional viewers’ TV screens.

Your prayers for the ongoing success of our various efforts to preach the good

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## Up and Coming

### June 18-21 2015—Troyer's Hollow Campground, Charm, Ohio

Come join your Church of God brethren to enjoy seclusion and fellowship in God's creation. The annual Troyer's Hollow weekend campout is located near Charm, Ohio, in Doughty Valley. Camp by the babbling brook or stay in a local hotel, celebrate the Sabbath in God's creation, eat popcorn by the campfire, listen to live country music jam and enjoy the blessing to be together as God's people.

Ohio Amish country is a popular tourist destination featured at [www.amishleben.com](http://www.amishleben.com). Shops and Amish attractions can be visited on Thursday and Friday.



## From THE WORD

by Suzanne Borton

As a young girl growing up I had a vision of the type of mom I wanted to be: I wanted to be *fun*, playing games with my kids, spending quality time with them, showing love, having patience, being nurturing and compassionate, being a good listener. And those qualities of a good mom sounded pretty easy to attain. I mean really, how hard can it be?

Boy, was I naïve.

I now have four girls between the ages of 3 and 12. I have found that being the type of mom I aspired to be at that young age is a lot harder than I thought. And of all the challenges of being a mom, I have found that I struggle the most with *sounding* loving and with *acting in* compassion and patience. Often my fatigue at the end of the day turns my "peaceful" bedtime routines into barking out orders as I herd the girls into bed. And when there are conflicts between the girls, I find myself yelling as much as the girls are in order to gain control of the situation. Now that they are older, I listen to the way they interact with each other and I can hear myself in their tone and actions with each other. My lack of self-control in dealing with them was contagious, and they caught it! That was *not* the mom that I wanted for my girls.

Over the years I really thought that I was lacking patience with my girls. If I had more patience I felt I would be a better mom. Our local church did a Bible study on the fruits of the Spirit one year, and we read the book *Naked Fruit: Getting Honest About the Fruit of the Spirit* by Elisa Morgan. When we came to the chapter on self-control and I read her introduction, it hit me square between the eyes that this was really the fruit that I was missing. Oh sure, I needed to use more patience too, but this was the one I was lacking even more. The author opened the chapter by telling about a busy day where she came home feeling exhausted. Then her

## Troyer's Hollow Weekend Getaway

Most are closed on Sunday. Hotel accommodations are available for those who do not want to camp.

You can begin to arrive at 2 p.m., Thursday, June 18, and plan to leave at 2 p.m., Sunday. There will be a Bible study at the beginning of the Sabbath at 8:30 p.m., Friday. Services will be held Sabbath morning at 11 a.m., with a potluck at 1 p.m. and Bible study at 3 p.m. Saturday evening after the Sabbath is when we will have the country music jam, popcorn, fireside sing-a-long and other activities.

Plan to bring your favorite dish in a crock pot, a vegetable or fruit tray and dessert for the potluck, as well as enough

food and water for your own family for the entire weekend. Bring your own lawn chairs and personal hymnals and instruments. Firewood, drinks, plates, cups and plasticware will be provided for the potluck.

### Camping

Camp amenities include a large screened-in pavilion (with electric, stove and running water), hot showers and flush toilets. Tent sites are \$15 per night, camper sites with up to six electric hookups are \$25 per night (please no air conditioners). There is room for other campers that do not hook up to electric for tent

pricing. For camping reservations and questions call Dan and Martha Miller at (330) 897-8860.

### Hotels

**Guggisburg Swiss Inn**

330-893-3600

**Holmes with a View**

330-893-2390 or 330-763-3017

**Berlin Village Inn**

330-893-2861



## AT A GLANCE

Continued from page 5

news of God's Kingdom and for His guidance and blessing is certainly appreciated—especially for the success of these new airtimes on the Word Network.

Victor Kubik & Peter Eddington

## UYC Shirt Design Contest Winner

The United Youth Camps team is excited to announce that we have a new design for the 2015 UYC camper shirts! There were a total of 12 entries from two countries. We would like to thank all the participants—you are all very talented and submitted great designs!

The winner of the 2015 UYC Shirt Design Contest, with a first-place award of a 50-percent camper tuition scholarship, is Blake Hawkins from Valley Center, Kansas. Blake is 15 years old and a



sophomore at Valley Center High School. He enjoys playing guitar, running track, wrestling, is class president, and is talented at designing and building various things. Blake is excited about winning this contest and is greatly looking forward to attending camp this summer.

Look for Blake's winning entry on hundreds of UYC camper shirts this summer and winter!

Ed Dowd

## Think You Lack Patience? Perhaps Self-Control Is Really What You Need—I Sure Did

kids need a special load of laundry for a shirt, something different for dinner, and oh yeah, a dozen cookies for a bake sale nobody had told her about the next day. You can only imagine the frustration that was building in her until she hit the boiling point when the "Monster Mom" (as she called it) came out through a tiny hole in the wall around her emotions. That is when the blaming and yelling begin.

I saw myself so much in this passage. So I committed to studying self-control a lot more. I found that it is less about "self," and more about control. More specifically, it is submitting to God's Holy Spirit, which gives us the self-control that we need in order to face our daily struggles. Proverbs 25:28 says, "Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control" (New International Version). I found that the hole in my wall had to do with controlling not only my tongue, but also my tone and actions in various situations. This has proven to be an ongoing battle, especially on days when I am more tired or emotional.

### Life Presents an Opportunity

So while studying the topic, I had a situation arise where I actually remembered to use the fruit of self-control. It happened while on one of my two-hour long grocery shopping trips with my then 2-year-old, Tiffany, and my 6-month-old, Farrah. We had found our way to the juice aisle with rows and rows of bright bottles of juice. I realized that I had missed the particular bottle that I needed, so I stopped the cart and took a step or two away to get the one I needed. Then suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw motion in the cart and the next thing I knew Tiffany went falling out of the cart. And as one does when one is falling, she grabbed the nearest thing—her little sister's car seat handle—and the two together went tumbling out of the cart. So I now have Farrah screaming and crying still strapped



in her tipped-over car seat, and Tiffany crying on the floor. My first instinct was to go over, grab Tiffany and say, "What in the world were you doing?! Why were you leaning out of the cart?! Why did you grab your sister?!"

But as I turned, the word "self-control" came into my mind, and I knew this was my opportunity to use it. At that moment I focused all my attention on them, not being concerned with what the others in the store were thinking of me as a mother. I first went to Farrah in the car seat and got her turned upright again. After examining her and seeing that she was fine, I set her to the side as she continued crying. I then went on to Tiffany and helped her to her feet. The look in her bright blue eyes was one of fear, not knowing for sure what her mom's response was going to be. I looked her over to be sure she was okay, and then I took her in my arms and gave her a hug. As I did this, I could feel and see the fear melt away from her. She calmed down quickly and began to apologize for what she had done. She said: "Mom, I

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# Announcements



**Samantha Adelle Massie**

Born Jan. 28, 2015



**Ethan Joseph Sternberg**

Born Feb. 14, 2015



**Lydia Joy Vautour**

Born March 2, 2015



**Jean and Ken Pulliam**

65 Years

## Births

### Samantha Adelle Massie

Lee and Lindsey Massie of the Columbia, Maryland, congregation would like to announce the birth of their daughter, **Samantha Adelle Massie**, whose name means “kind listener.” She was born just after midnight on Jan. 28, 2015, at a healthy 7 lbs., 2 oz. She is constantly smothered in love by her two older siblings, Elizabeth and Nye. Samantha is the 10th grandchild of John and Rosie Massie of the Lewistown, Pennsylvania, congregation, and the eighth grandchild of Greg and Carol Bertollini of central Virginia.

### Ethan Joseph Sternberg

Eric and Rachel Sternberg are pleased to announce the birth of their son, **Ethan Joseph Sternberg**. Ethan was born on Feb. 14, 2015, at 1:21 a.m. He weighed 9 lbs., 7 oz., and was 21 in. long. Rachel and Ethan attend the Columbia, Maryland, congregation; he is the grandson of Joann Gingerich.

### Lydia Joy Vautour

Gabriel, Michelle and Joshua Vautour, of the Ottawa, Ontario, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their new addition to the family, **Lydia Joy**, who was born on March 2, 2015. Adorable little Lydia weighed in at 6 lbs., 6 oz., and 19.3 in. long. We’re thankful to God for our precious little miracle.

Proud grandparents are Jorge and Kathy de Campos of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Jean Pierre and Camilla Vautour of New Brunswick, Ontario. Lydia is the sixth grandchild of Jorge and Kathy de Campos and the 10th grandchild of Jean Pierre and Camilla Vautour.

## Anniversaries

### Jean and Ken Pulliam

Jean and Ken Pulliam met at a dance in Benevolent Grove in Cold Springs, Ken-

tucky. It was a favorite place for all young people to meet and dance to some good local bands.

Some of the things Ken and Jean love to do together are attend church, dine out and see a good movie. During their life together, they’ve also enjoyed swimming, picnics, playing baseball, and traveling to overseas Feast sites.

Besides meeting at the right place—the dance hall—the Pulliams attribute their long, happy marriage God for giving them each a loving and caring lifelong mate. Asked for advice to younger couples, they said: “Do things together—not only what you want, but what the other mate wants. Keep a sense of humor; it helps you through the rough times. Tell each other you love the other, and demonstrate your love by your actions.”

The Pulliams attended their first church service on Dec. 7, 1963, and both were baptized in March 1964. Ken was ordained a deacon in 1968 and his wife a deaconess 1969. On Feb. 11, 1984, Ken was ordained an elder.

Ken and Jean Pulliam have four children—Jeff, Linda, Diane and Steve—12 grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren.

## Obituaries

### Margaret (“Peggy”) Blosser

Margaret (“Peggy”) Blosser, a faithful member for many years, passed away March 4, after a 10-year decline in health. She was 91 years old. She was born June 25, 1923, in Indiana, Pennsylvania, to John and Gaynelle Campbell, helping on the family farm and dairy until she graduated from college in 1944. She then taught high school art and became a well-known local artist in the area, painting rural landscapes, covered bridges and barns. She also was commissioned to paint pictures for many local homeowners.

She met her husband, Robert “Mac”

Blosser, after he returned from the European theater of World War II, and they were married in 1948. Challenged by her mother-in-law to research the origins of Christmas, Peggy found that it indeed was a pagan holiday, and she sent for the Radio Church of God’s literature, which led to her and Mac’s baptism together in 1960 shortly after her in-laws were also baptized. They attended the Pittsburgh, Johnstown,

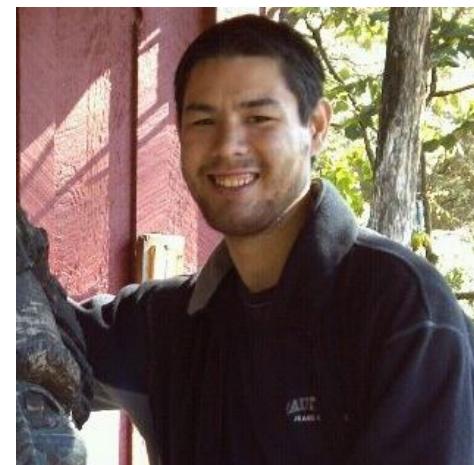


**Margaret (“Peggy”) Blosser**

June 25, 1923–March 4, 2015

Feb. 22, 2015, at his home. He was the youngest child of Jerrit and Kathleen (Wong) Ekama.

David graduated from Garaway High School in 2007, where he was a member of the wrestling team and band. After graduation, he continued his education at the Ohio College of Massotherapy. David then transferred to Stark State College and Kent State University to pursue a degree in sound technology.



**David Charles Ekama**

1988–2015

and Indiana congregations. Peggy and Mac were remembered for hosting picnics and potlucks at their home for the brethren and for providing rides for those in their area to services and other church activities.

Besides painting, Peggy’s hobbies included reading, writing short stories, and travel. She visited most of the 50 states and several Canadian provinces, either for the Feast or on covered bridge “safaris” with her friends.

Peggy is preceded in death by her husband. Survivors are daughters Linda (Steve) Martens and Karen (Tim) Border; five granddaughters and three great-grandsons.

### David Charles Ekama

David Charles Ekama, 27, of New Philadelphia, died unexpectedly on

He was a member of the North Canton congregation, where he enjoyed serving in many different capacities. He particularly enjoyed serving as a sound engineer in his local congregation and at the Feast of Tabernacles. David loved the outdoors and was a member of the Boy Scouts and 4-H.

David was a special young man. He cherished his loved ones as well as anyone else he met. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends, especially for his wonderful sense of humor, his soft touch and gentle massages, and his willingness to serve.

In addition to his parents, David is survived by his siblings Tanya, Talitha, Nathan and Peter; his grandparents Charles and Winifred Wong, and his Ohana in California and Hawaii. David

**Please see next page**

# Announcements



**Shirley King Johnson**

March 18, 1927-March 5, 2015

was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents Peter and Eugenia Ekama.

## Shirley King Johnson

Shirley King Johnson fell asleep in the faith on March 5, 2015, aged 87. Born March 18, 1927, to Roland and Gladys King, she grew up with her three siblings on an Iowa farm, where she acquired a lifelong love for gardening and animals. About 10 years after her marriage to Thomas Johnson in 1946, his job with Safeway Stores took them to Lincoln, Nebraska, where she lived the rest of her life. While their four children were in school, the stay-at-home mom was busy gardening and teaching herself to write short stories.

In the early 60s her life was changed when her twin sister Sharlot introduced her to *The Plain Truth* magazine and *The World Tomorrow* broadcast. After several years' worth of Bible study, Shirley was baptized and began attending with the Radio Church of God in Omaha in 1967. During the 70s her writing blossomed into a series of children's stories about Major the Beagle, which were printed in *Worldwide News*.

Shirley was ordained a deaconess in 1980. She provided the Lincoln congregation with flower arrangements from her garden, and after her husband's death in 1985 she opened her home for Bible studies, socials and baptisms. The division of the Church in 1995, the death of her twin sister, and her gradually declining strength all took a toll on her, but she delighted in her seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, and never lost her desire to please God. She left handwritten instructions for cremation and a short graveside service, then signed off at the bottom of the note with a cheerful "See you later!"

## Norman A. Myers, Sr.

Norman A. Myers, Sr. died in the early morning hours of Dec. 21, 2014, at the age of 86. Mr. Myers served for more than three decades as a minister of Jesus Christ.

He was born in Chicago, Illinois, on



**Norm A. Myers**

April 3, 1928-Dec. 21, 2014

April 3, 1928, the only child of Albert and Florence (Miller) Myers. At about age 12, his family moved to Northlake, Illinois, where he met Donna Herington at a gas station and helped her fill her bicycle tires with air. A spark began, they started dating in high school and after graduation they were married on March 13, 1948.

Mr. Myers had many different jobs over the years: carpenter, cabinet maker, musician, salesman, greens-keeper, laundry manager, director of purchasing at a hospital, landlord and other jobs too numerous to mention. He described himself as a "jack of all trades and master of some."

Mr. Myers is survived by his loving wife, Donna, his life partner of 66 years; his five children Debby Jaeger (Jerry); Skip Myers; Steve Myers (Kathe); David Myers (Pam); and John Myers (Patricia). He is also survived by 12 grandchildren, three step-granddaughters, six great-grandchildren and seven step-great-grandchildren.

Norm and Donna Myers moved to New London, Wisconsin, in 1962 where they raised their family. He loved music and was a bandleader, drummer and percussionist. He played in duos, trios, Dixieland bands, jazz bands, concert bands, big bands and even a family band called The Generation Gap with his sons.

In 1975 he was baptized and moved to Pasadena, California, where he attended Ambassador College and worked for the Worldwide Church of God. He was ordained a minister in 1981 and pastored congregations in Denver, Colorado; Dayton, Ohio; and Kenosha, Waukesha, Milwaukee, and Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He dedicated his life to serving God and His people. After retiring from the full-time ministry he moved to Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to be near three of his children.

Though retired, Norm continued to serve the Church in a wide variety of ways by traveling throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota to speak, visiting and encouraging members of the United Church of God until the time of his death.



**Linda Lee O'Grady**

Nov. 7, 1940-Sept. 13, 2014

A special memorial service was held on Dec. 28, 2014, to celebrate and honor his life. The entire service may be viewed on line at: [www.vimeo.com/116223599](http://www.vimeo.com/116223599). A short tribute to Norm's life can be viewed at [www.vimeo.com/116223600](http://www.vimeo.com/116223600).

He firmly believed the words of 1 Corinthians 15:50-54: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God... Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed..."

He lived his life in the firm hope and belief that his Savior, Jesus Christ, will resurrect Him a spiritual member of the Family of God when He returns and establishes the Kingdom of God here on the earth. May God speed that day.

## Linda Lee O'Grady

Linda Lee O'Grady, age 73, a longtime, faithful member of the Nashville, Tennessee, congregation, died on Sept. 13, 2014, after a weeks-long battle with multiple health issues.

Linda was born in Algood, Tennessee, on Nov. 7, 1940, to parents Thomas Lee and Essie Madge Anderson. Her family moved to Nashville shortly after she was born. As a child she was quite sickly, having suffered from Rheumatic Fever. Her health improved as an adult.

Linda and her parents started listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio and became baptized members of the Church of God in the late 60s. After the deaths of her parents, Linda met and later married Charles Eldon O'Grady on Feb. 10, 1974. The following year they had their only child, Elizabeth. Linda worked as a homemaker. She took good care of her family, especially her husband Charles who later went on to suffer with epilepsy and then later in life with dementia. Charles died on Aug. 28, 2008, from a heart attack.

After Charles' death she moved into a seniors high rise and lived in a one-bedroom apartment. Her last years were spent in setting a wonderful example to all who knew her. She is greatly missed by



**Mike Roman**

July 11, 1955-Jan. 17, 2015

her family and friends. Linda is survived by her daughter and son-in-law Elizabeth and Basil Kopey; her brother and sister-in-law Kenneth and Sara Anderson; and two nephews, Scott and Troy Anderson.

## Mike Roman

Mike Roman, a member of the Cleveland, Ohio, congregation died on Jan. 17, 2015. Born on July 11, 1955, Mike's birth name was Michael Joseph Sherrick. He was adopted by the Roman family at the age of three.

Mike sought out his siblings later in life, finding and meeting two. The pain of other discoveries he made about his biological family led him to determine that he would wait until the resurrection to re-establish a relationship with them.

He loved both of his adoptive parents but was especially close to his father, who died when Mike was 13 years old. Devastated by his dad's death, he became very angry, and by his mid-teens he was in frequent trouble with the law.

Mike's first contact with the Church of God goes back to Worldwide Church of God, when he first met with minister Greg Johnson. A few years later Mike was in prison when he contacted Cleveland pastor Lyle Welty. After his release he began attending Church regularly and was baptized on March 19, 1999.

Three years ago Mike began to experience the problems with his health that would lead to his death. He was a handyman and carpenter; many of the people he did work for attest to the high quality of his work and his outstanding work ethic. He was also a very good artist. He had a particular fondness for lighthouses, and would draw them, photograph them and obtain pictures of them.

Mike was very loyal to his friends. This was demonstrated not only to Church friends, but the friendships that he maintained over the years from childhood on. He often tried to help others who shared the same struggles he did by giving them work to do. Since Mike never married, he never had the opportunity to raise a family of his own, so he viewed his spiritual family as his true family. A final memorial service for Mike was held on March 14.

## 99 Ladies Enjoyed a Change-of-Pace Women's Enrichment Weekend in Southern California



Three happy zipliners: Janet Phillips, Marie Zelenka and Sherie Stores (photo by Jean Updegraff).

This past Feb. 6-8, 99 ladies enjoyed and profited from Southern California's 14th annual Women's Enrichment Weekend. Instead of our usual hotel setting we chose a state-of-the-art outdoor education center owned by the Boy Scouts. From our meeting hall we could enjoy seeing the green hills and nature (in Southern California, this is a treat). The theme was "Go For It—God's Way." We did just that at this weekend.

We appreciated having Steve and Melania Nutzman join us from Idaho to be guest speakers. Mr. Nutzman gave the sermon Sabbath morning titled "Mentoring—Go for It God's Way." The sermon was preceded by three special music presentations: a violin duet by Naia Hooker and Ia Reyes and vocal solos by Ingrid Helge and Laura Roberts. On Saturday afternoon Mrs. Nutzman gave the theme overview "Going Forward—God's Way," followed by Caty Seigle who shared some of the challenges of Church women in Latin America.

Later Saturday afternoon Jean Marini, Laura Roberts and Yadira Vargas reinforced the theme by sharing their varied personal experiences and lessons. After dinner together in the meeting hall, we enjoyed the creative and innovative talents of some of our ladies in a variety show organized by Ingrid Helge.

Sunday morning Lorelei Nettles, Alina Miller and Erika Schmid continued sharing personal experiences. After the early session and before lunch many took advantage of some of what the facility had to offer. Many of the ladies tried their hand at zip-lining and had a blast! Others opted for Zumba/line dancing in the meeting hall. More enjoyed watching these happy ladies or enjoyed their own

peaceful walk in nature.

Sunday afternoon Margaret Saarinen shared "Secrets of a Confident Woman," and Becky Garnant closed the presentations by answering the question "What is 'It'?" Sylvia Kennedy expertly wove the presentations together as our moderator.

This year our ladies not only learned more how to "Go For It—God's Way," but were able to apply those lessons and tools directly during the course of this special event.

*Jean Updegraff*

## Southern Minnesota's Youth Day Sabbath Service and Winter Family Social



Isabelle White dressed as a TV princess enjoying a hot chocolate drink.

The Southern Minnesota, La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, congregations hosted their 18th annual youth day Sabbath service and winter family social this year at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, Minnesota. There were also young people from Minneapolis/St. Paul, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Cincinnati, Ohio, who made contributions to the service and enjoyed fellowship with their family and friends in Southern Minnesota. Many in the local congregation, as well as those from the Twin Cities, participated in making this year's youth day and social remarkably successful.

The youth also served helping with table decorations, food service, hall set up, kitchen chores, game activities and, at the end of the evening, they helped with cleanup.

Everyone enjoyed the company of our visiting guests Matt and Lisa Fenchel. Mr. Fenchel gave a fine sermon on the transitional phases of our lives and how life can be only understood backwards, but it must be lived forward in hope and in faith.

Sabbath services were followed with a chili buffet dinner around 5 p.m. The congregation's men made chili-filled

crook pots, half of them mild and the other half on the hot and spicy side.

After the meal, snow tubing was one of the popular activities enjoyed by 36 energetic boys, girls and the young at heart. Horse-drawn sleigh rides were also available for those interested in enjoying the evening's mild temperatures, which were actually above freezing, making the ride quite pleasant.

The cupcake contest began at 7:30 p.m. The congregation's ladies honed their baking skills and brought an overabundance of beautifully garnished, great tasting, assorted cupcakes. They were judged by a panel of young people and prizes were awarded as the evening progressed.

The theme for the evening was "TV or movie personalities," and many dressed the part, and received prizes for the best and most interesting costumes. Later on, others participated in a Bible Jeopardy, which was hosted by Brett Wood and John and Peggy Yule.

Naturally it took many helpful hands to organize the social and serve the congregations. Everyone benefited from the men's cooking skills, and no one complained about the delicious cupcakes. The evening was an enormous success. We gave God thanks and glory for His blessing on the weather and the day's activities.

*Dagmar Howe*

## "Walking By Faith"—Southwest Missouri Women's Enrichment Weekend 2015



A total of 54 women gathered from across the region and Canada for the fourth annual

Women's Enrichment Weekend at the Nixa Event Center, Feb. 13-15, 2015. Learning opportunities were punctuated with laughter, sharing and encouragement.

The weekend began on Friday evening with a light dinner and get-acquainted activity. Peter Eddington spoke at Sabbath services, where nearly 100 members gathered. His sermon was entitled "Perfect Practice Makes Perfect," showcasing the life of Miriam. Throughout the weekend, music was provided by the Kansas City and Springfield Women's Ensembles

with accompaniment by Judy Noel.

Linda Wasilkoff started off our presentations, talking about what it takes to learn to walk and comparing it to our spiritual journey of faith. Other speakers included Linda Boswell, Deana Kemp, Christal Curtis, Kathleen Urbom, Dorothy Schmidt, Glenda Dennis, and Donna Robinson. A highlight for all was Evelyn Eslinger's presentation entitled "My 60-Year Journey of Faith."

This year's service project supported LifeNets International. The money collected will go towards a scholarship for a member to attend university in Tonga. He will be studying agriculture, which will help support his family as well as the community.

Food throughout the weekend was provided by various church areas including Tulsa/Oklahoma, St. Louis, Springfield, and congregations in Alabama and Georgia. This support helps keep this weekend affordable for most.

Comments about the weekend included the opportunity to learn from other women and building lasting relationships. One woman stated, "It's inspirational to see the perseverance and faith of these women through their trials." Several women referenced how uplifting the weekend was and stated that they would be back next year!

*Merna Leisure-Eppick*

## Portland Women's Enrichment Weekend



83 ladies from Washington, Oregon, and California attended the Women's Enrichment Weekend in Portland, Oregon, from Feb. 20-22, 2015. The theme was "Showers of Comfort." The messages focused on life challenges and ways that godly women can comfort others.

On Friday, the ladies played a get-to-know-you game. Friday evening LeeAnn Luker gave a heart-warming presentation on her experience with coping with the loss of her husband, Denny. She and the audience listed ways that we can comfort others as well as things that do not provide comfort to others.

On Sabbath morning, Hansel New and Ben Light gave split-sermons. Mr. Light's message was titled "Barnabas—the Son of Encouragement." He showed that

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Barnabas was a good man and was full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:22-24). Mr. New gave a message entitled "Agents of Comfort." Mr. New stressed that we should look to God for comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3). Also he stated that older women in the Church should be "reverent, not slanderers, not given to much wine, and teachers and good examples to younger women in the church" (Titus 2:3).

Emily New, Samantha Stewart and Mackenzie Griswald sang a song entitled "Create in Me a Clean Heart." Hansel New accompanied them on the guitar. Also a group of ladies sang "Faithfulness." Heidi Newcomb played "Bring Him Home" on the cello accompanied by Carmella Weis on the piano. Amanda Richards sang a song entitled "Unpack Your Heart" by Phillip Phillips.

Sabbath afternoon Jan Segall gave a presentation on how she has risen above challenges in life and ways that she has found comfort. Carrie Lippincott, Terri Miller and Betty Aime spoke about their lives and ways that they have found comfort. Saturday night was filled with a silent auction, card-making and a hymn sing-along. The silent auction raised more than \$900, which was donated to the Good Works program.

On Sunday, Sandy Cafourek and Rachelle New led an interactive workshop that allowed participants to get to know each other better. Afterwards Karen Walker gave a presentation on challenging times in her life when she needed comfort. Dyanne Dick gave a wrap-up message that was followed by a delicious brunch. The ladies seemed to benefit greatly from the weekend and many said they looked forward to attending the Women's Enrichment Weekend next year.

*Carmella Weis*

## Southern Minnesota Honors Newlywed Couple



On Feb. 28, 2015, the Southern Minnesota congregation honored newlyweds Justin and Melissa Boyer with a gift card, congratulation cake and sparkling punch. The Boyers were united in marriage on Jan. 30, 2015, in a small

family ceremony. The congregation wanted to share in their joy and excitement as Justin and Melissa begin a new chapter in their lives. Presently the Boyers reside in Rochester, Minnesota, and attend the Southern Minnesota congregation.

*Dagmar Howe*

## New Orleans Celebrates Golden Anniversary of Church



The golden anniversary for the New Orleans Church of God was celebrated Feb. 28, 2015. The church was started in 1964 when racial integration was a challenge in the South. Vernon Hargrove was their first pastor. Many pastors came and went in the 50 years, but the Church continued on. There were more than 50 in attendance on this special Sabbath. Jim and Gayle Wilkins now pastor a handful compared to the numbers that once were.

Stan Martin started the service by reminiscing about the years he was in New Orleans; he recounted some of his awkward moments when trying to phonetically pronounce the French names for places. In New Orleans, some words have their own tradition. Vernon Hargrove followed with a message about God as a righteous judge, who knows our hearts, and won't be making any mistakes with His family. There were past references to other ministers such as James Jenkins, whose daughter Juanita and husband were in attendance.

After the service, the meeting hall was turned into a lovely banquet hall. The membership were the caterers with lots of well-presented food and two distinct New Orleans style dishes: jambalaya and pickled okra.

The afternoon was spent reminiscing with laughter and some melancholy. Stories were told about money borrowed to get a car out of impound when a member had illegally parked. One man related his dubious claim to fame as the only spokesman that failed his ice breaker. Holy Day bloopers, such as when word went around that there was bacon in the green beans at a catered meal for 350. Afterward the waiters were overheard comparing notes. One said: "Did you notice the ashtrays are all empty? These people don't smoke," and the other replied, "Yes and they don't eat green beans either." Also in attendance were two lovely 90-plus-year-old ladies.

Both had been a part of the congregation for many years.

As part of the cake-cutting ceremony, Woodie McDuffie presented the following champagne toast.

"This era started with 'Greetings friends from around the world, this is Herbert Armstrong bringing you the plain truth of the world today and the prophecies of the world tomorrow.'

"Here's to the blessings we have received in the knowledge and understanding of God's way of life and the relationships that we have made that will last a lifetime. Lift a glass to 50 years of God's Church here in New Orleans and the wonderful calling we have received."

Spirits were high as the members celebrated their golden anniversary. Gold is beautiful, strong and resistant to corrosion. A fitting symbol of years of dedication.

*DeLee Hargrove*

## Bay Area Churches Enjoy a Weekend of Friendship and Recreation



The Oakland, California, congregation hosted a Bay Area family fun weekend on March 7-8, 2015.

After combined Sabbath services, those present enjoyed a potluck meal featuring a main course of lamb generously donated and prepared by Wallace Gans, who attends the Oakland congregation. There was plenty of time to fellowship and get to know the visitors that afternoon.

After the delicious meal, participants began a bingo party with white elephant gifts as prizes, creating amiable competition. The teens helped run the game by calling out the winning numbers and watching for who was first to shout "Bingo!"

The evening continued with a sock-hop dance. Many obliging party participants revealed their crazy colored socks and danced away to a variety of fun music.

On Sunday the group met up at Fort Cronkite for lunch on the beach. They were blessed with a sunny, clear day and spent the afternoon hiking up to see the old gun batteries and fortifications overlooking the fort, checking out the Marine Mammal Center, and testing out the chilly Pacific Ocean water.

The Bay Area family fun weekend was

a nice opportunity to spend time with brethren of the surrounding areas and explore the natural beauty of Northern California.

*Kourtney Hannaway*

## 50th Anniversary of the Church of God in Maryland



The Church of God in Maryland celebrated 50 years on March 7, 2015, with 122 in attendance! The first church service in the area was held on March 6, 1965, in downtown

Baltimore. The theme of the celebration was taken from Matthew 17:20: "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

The sermon for the day was given by Don McCoy on loving one another. There were special music pieces performed during Sabbath services by various members and families in the congregation.

We had a delightful organized finger food meal with platters of sandwiches, wraps, chicken wings, and meatballs, as well as cheese, veggie and fruit trays. A dessert table was set up with brownies, cookies, miniature desserts, ice cream, and a cake commemorating the 50th anniversary. Tables were full of memorabilia, from pictures to brochures commemorating previous anniversary celebrations in the area, as well as a copy of a letter from Herbert Armstrong announcing the first church service in Maryland, and a *Plain Truth* magazine from March 1965.

A photo booth was set up for anyone interested in having their picture taken throughout the evening. There were silver lapel pins engraved with "All Things Possible Mustard Seed" given to each adult as a keepsake. Each teen received a Ten Commandments and a mustard seed bookmark, and each of the younger children received a goody bag. The entertainment after the Sabbath included performances by the youth in the congregation, and to top off the night, there was a narrated slideshow featuring photos of events and brethren in the area over the past 50 years.

*Rhonda Diggins*

## Portland Church Honors the Retirement From the Ministry of Noel and Becky Hornor



On the Sabbath of March 14, the Portland congregation gathered for a potluck and evening of recognizing Noel and Becky Hornor for their service to the Church. After nearly 45 years in the ministry and 40 years of marriage, there was much to celebrate. Following the delicious meal, Bob Dick introduced a PowerPoint slideshow showcasing many highlights of their lives, from their service in California to Minnesota and then

Portland. We enjoyed seeing photos of them in their many Feast travels and with their children as they grew into adulthood and had children of their own.

Harvey Werner and Bruce Koester were given the chance to pay heartfelt and humorous tributes to the Hornors, having served with them for many years on the west side of Portland before the congregation combined with Portland East. The Hornors then both expressed their appreciation to their Portland church family after spending the last 25 years in the area.

Mr. Dick presented them with an engraved globe to honor their service, a watch for Mr. Hornor and a new set of cookware for Mrs. Hornor. Finally, cake was cut and desserts enjoyed while the visiting and laughter continued. It was an evening where the church family was able to celebrate two generous, devoted and faithful servants. We are all grateful they will continue to spend their retirement years in the Portland area.

Debbie Werner

## Cincinnati East Honors Two Couples' Major Anniversary Milestones



Ken and Phyllis O'Bryan, left; Jean and Ken Pulliam, right.

The Cincinnati East congregation held a joint anniversary celebration for two couples who have been married a combined 125 years. Jean and Ken Pulliam celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary March 31, 2015, and Ken and Phyllis O'Bryan celebrated their 60th anniversary on Jan. 15, 2015. Ken and Phyllis' anniversary announcement was published in the January 2015 issue of

*United News.*

See Jean and Ken Pulliam's anniversary announcement on page 5.

The celebration took place on the Sabbath after Days of Unleavened Bread, April 11. Although it took place after the Holy Days, there was no time to order or prepare a traditional cake, so local member Connie Sipes baked unleavened ones instead. Local church family and friends all enjoyed the snacks and congratulated the two couples.

Janet Treadway

**Local Church Updates:** Send us news and events from your local congregation! Check with your pastor and have him forward what you write. We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you'd like photos returned. Include the author's and photographer's names. Please double-check the spelling of names. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give the material to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

## GCE 2015

Continued from page 1

honored for significant work anniversaries include John Elliott, Alec Surratt, Jim Tuck, Randy D'Alessandro, Joe Dobson and John Labissoniere for 40 years of service; Gary Petty and Connie Seelig for 30 years; Barbara Antion for 20 years; and Dan Dowd, Linda Wasilkoff and Moise Mabout for 10 years.

Balloting took place after this for the business items on the agenda as well as for Council seats. After the ballot was taken Mr. Webber began his chairman's address.

### Chairman's address—Robin Webber

Mr. Webber stressed that the Church needs to continue to develop our positive environment of love and mutual respect so that we may continue to grow in the Spirit of God. He said the Church needs to be looking up and leaning forward. We have a chance now to look back at the past 20 years and learn lessons that we can take forward into the future. We celebrated the weekend, but it wasn't a celebration of ourselves. We celebrated the love, patience and blessing of God and Jesus Christ that have brought us this far.

Mr. Webber pointed out that we continue the work of examining ourselves in the mirror of Scripture to ensure that our hearts are aligned with God's plan for our lives.

He said that unity is not just superficial conformity, it's something that comes from spiritual maturity. It's a characteristic of a godly heart. Those who are growing in this Church and those who are coming



*"We all must have a renewed love affair with the truth." — Donald Ward*

to us for guidance deserve our best effort in walking "according to the calling of which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1). The apostle Paul made sure that we knew there is one calling, one Lord, one hope, one faith and one baptism that we hold to. We dedicate ourselves to that God and to that calling.

He exhorted the assembly that as we move forward we need to look above and keep our eyes and hearts focused on our God, who tells us, "Follow me."

### President's Address—Victor Kubik

Mr. Kubik began by thanking everyone for their service in making the GCE happen. He also expressed his appreciation that he has such a good working relationship with the Council of Elders and the various operation managers in managing the daily work of the Church.

He expressed excitement about new opportunities in both media proclama-

tion and ministerial service that will propel the Church forward into the future. We want to make certain that the Church and *Beyond Today* as its media arm are recognizable to the general public as we preach the gospel. We are in the process of consolidating our media presence under the *Beyond Today* identity, with print, television and Web content to be presented as *Beyond Today* content.

We're in a place where we have the chance to make some very positive and forward-looking changes. We will be adding ministerial support for our congregations and developing new ministerial trainees who will be hired in the future. We'll have opportunities for those who may be ordained in the future to serve in a training capacity. Ambassador Bible College will be further developed as a place of biblical learning and training in service and leadership. We're looking into it being accredited for international students to be able to more easily come and learn as well.

We're truly an international association. He encouraged us to pray for God's blessing and continue His work in preaching the gospel and preparing a people.

### Treasurer's Address—Rick Shabi

Mr. Shabi began by expressing that we need to be deeply thankful to God for His sustaining blessings. We're in an excellent place financially, and we should be thank-

ful for times of abundance. He referenced 2 Chronicles 26:5, which holds great instruction for us in making sure that we are seeking God's will and obeying Him in all we do. That's the best practice in ensuring financial stability.

Our internal audit showed no internal deficiencies in practice, meaning that the Church is well run, with everyone doing their job properly. This assures financial transparency and wise use of God's blessings. We consider our funds to be God's money, so we make sure that we are using what He gives us and allows us to use in the best possible way to serve Him and His people.

Overall our cash balances are doing well, with strong increases across the board. Our good financial position enables us to better fulfill our mission, which is to preach the gospel, prepare a people for God and care for the disciples that He calls.

He thanked the rest of the Financial Services staff for their quality work and dependability. They work well as a team and together assure the proper use of God's funds.

### Ministerial and Member Services Address—Roy Holladay

Mr. Holladay started by saying that the ministry has been called to a unique responsibility in the Church. They are called to be helpers and servants of the membership and those whom God calls. There are 366 elders in the United Church of God, with 283 in the United States and 83 in international areas. There are 87 U.S. congregation pastors. We see a larger number this year due to the newly ordained men introduced earlier.

Please see page 12

There are 196 congregations in the U.S., and we had 131 baptisms in the past year. We are planting the seeds of growth through our gospel proclamation efforts and our work to provide good service and leadership for our congregations across the world. We are working to be ready for a greater response to God's message in the future.

Mr. Holladay emphasized the work that is underway in the leadership training and development department. The Church is at a confluence of three major trends: retirement, education and leadership development. There is a continual need to train and develop new ministers, refresh current ministers and train new leaders. A new training plan is being started, in which men will be pastors-in-training, with the eventual goal of being used as church pastors. We have great opportunities ahead of us as we work to fulfill God's commission to make disciples and care for those disciples.

## Media and Communication Services Address—Peter Eddington

Mr. Eddington began by playing a short video introducing the new website that describes the major changes from the last version. Highlights are the mobile-friendly, adaptive design that scales to any size screen, from smartphone to tablet to desktop monitor.

Mr. Eddington said that we're much better positioned for the future with the launch of the new, mobile-friendly UCG.org. In addition, we're working hard to get our video content (*Beyond Today* television, Bible studies, short films and others) on as many streaming platforms as possible in the coming year. We've heard stories of users finding the gospel truth almost accidentally by coming across our content on streaming platforms. There are many opportunities in streaming services that can get *Beyond Today* content into many more households across the world than ever before possible.

We have the most coworkers on file that we've ever had in UCG's history, showing that people are able to connect with our message and are looking for ways to become a part of the mission of the Church. We pray for God's continued blessing in taking His Word to a world that so desperately needs it.

After a lunch break, Ken Martin led the tribute to deceased elders and wives.

## International Reports

**Canada—Rainer Salomaa.** The Canadian national office of UCG has eight total employees, two full-time and six part-time. Anthony Wasilkoff is the director of operations, Edwin van Pelt is the treasurer, and Dale van Zant is the

HR manager. Average church attendance is 525 for the past four years, and there are over 20,000 Canadian *Good News* subscribers. There have been more than 40,000 responses to *Beyond Today* TV over the past 10 years.

**Ghana and Nigeria—Paul Moody.** Paul Moody from Spokane, Washington, followed with the report on the Church in Ghana and Nigeria. Mark Mickelson, a Council of Elders member from Washington, is the senior pastor of the region, and Benjamin Agyapong of Ghana is the pastor for several of the Ghanaian congregations.

The United Youth Camps program in Ghana and Nigeria is very successful and gives Church youth in those areas opportunities they wouldn't otherwise be able to have.

**Brazil—Jorge DeCampos.** Jorge DeCampos pointed out that it is not the Portuguese language work, it is God's work in Portuguese. The vast majority of the Portuguese work takes place in Brazil. There is currently a religious revival of a type in Brazil, with many different types of religions, including outright paganism, becoming very popular. This is both an opportunity and a challenge in preaching the gospel message.

**French Language—Tim Pebworth.** Tim Pebworth of San Jose, California, along with his wife Maryse, serve in the French-speaking areas. There are 5,500 *Bonnes Nouvelles* subscriptions sent to individuals in 51 countries. There are 180 French-speaking brethren in Africa, along with several in Quebec, Canada, as well. We just recently have congregations in Cote D'Ivoire, where there are 70 members.

**British Isles—David Fenney.** United Church of God in the British Isles operates on its own national council with five executive members and three non-executive advisors. The council serves eight congregations across the British Isles, with an additional congregation that meets every other Sabbath. The Church in Britain is looking to develop more helpers to serve the membership and preach the gospel more effectively.

After a short break Robin Webber introduced the keynote speaker Don Ward.

## Keynote: "The Trunk of the Tree"—Don Ward

Dr. Ward began by commenting that the spirit and conversation at this year's meeting is one of the best he's seen in his years in the Church. He says that we who have been given the precious gift of God's Word must struggle for the truth.

The purpose of the conference was to stir us up to labor in the Word and stay close to the "trunk of the tree." The trunk of the tree is the set of beliefs that is necessary and essential for salvation. That is what must be clung to at all costs. We must struggle for that truth.



*"Unity is not external conformity . . . It is spiritual maturity." —Robin Webber*

The first article of faith is in Hebrews 11:6—We must believe that God is. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. This is the first great truth. Other great truths: Who is God? What is God? What is God's purpose? Who is man? What is man's purpose? What must one do to inherit the Kingdom of God? The answers to these questions are available in God's Word, which we hold dear and precious.

Our great future is to be part of God's family along with God the Father and Jesus Christ. God is love, and love is His motivation in sharing Himself and His nature with mankind.

The ministry has a God-given responsibility to read the Bible and teach the brethren sound doctrine. We must not be thrown around by every wind of doctrine. We must cling to and be willing to give our lives for the trunk of the tree.

## Laboring in the Word—Roy Holladay

Mr. Holladay said that it is the responsibility of Ministerial and Member Services to make sure that the theme and focus of the General Conference of Elders meeting doesn't get forgotten moving forward. We have the responsibility of preaching the Word. Our preaching needs to be true and accurate—exactly what the Scripture says.

We also have a responsibility to provide good spiritual food to the Church and to the world. It should be a balanced biblical diet that nourishes their spiritual lives.

Mr. Holladay reintroduced Dr. Ward to finish up the discussion with an explanation of the educational initiative for the ministry.

Dr. Ward said that we have the challenge of helping the Church accomplish its vision and mission. There are four basic areas to the initiative. There will be a series of courses on biblical topics available for the ministry. This will act as

a "refresher" program to establish sound biblical teachings. There will also be classes available about pastoral care.

He hopes we will all read the Bible afresh and read it for what it says and preach the pure truth of God's Word.

## Ballot Results—Robin Webber

Approve 2015 Strategic Plan—Yes 229-14; Approve 2015 Operation Plan—Yes 220-22; Approve 2015-2016 Fiscal Budget—Yes 219-24; Approve Proposed Amended Bylaws—Yes 169-49; Approve Proposed Amended Bylaw Article 12.0: Amendments—Yes 180-31; Procedure for Amending Constitution, Bylaws and Rules of Association—Yes 184-31;

Approve Amendment Constitution Section 1.2.4: General Conference of Elders—Yes 204-22; Approve Amendment Constitution Section 3.2: Functions Within the Church—Yes 199-24; Approve Amendment Constitution Section 3.2.2: The Local Congregation—Yes 197-29; Approve Amendment Constitution Section 4.10: Attendance at Meetings of the General Conference—Yes 207-15; Approve Procedure for Appealing Suspension or Expulsion From the General Conference of Elders—Yes 200-21.

## Council of Elders Seats

International council seat: Anthony Wasilkoff

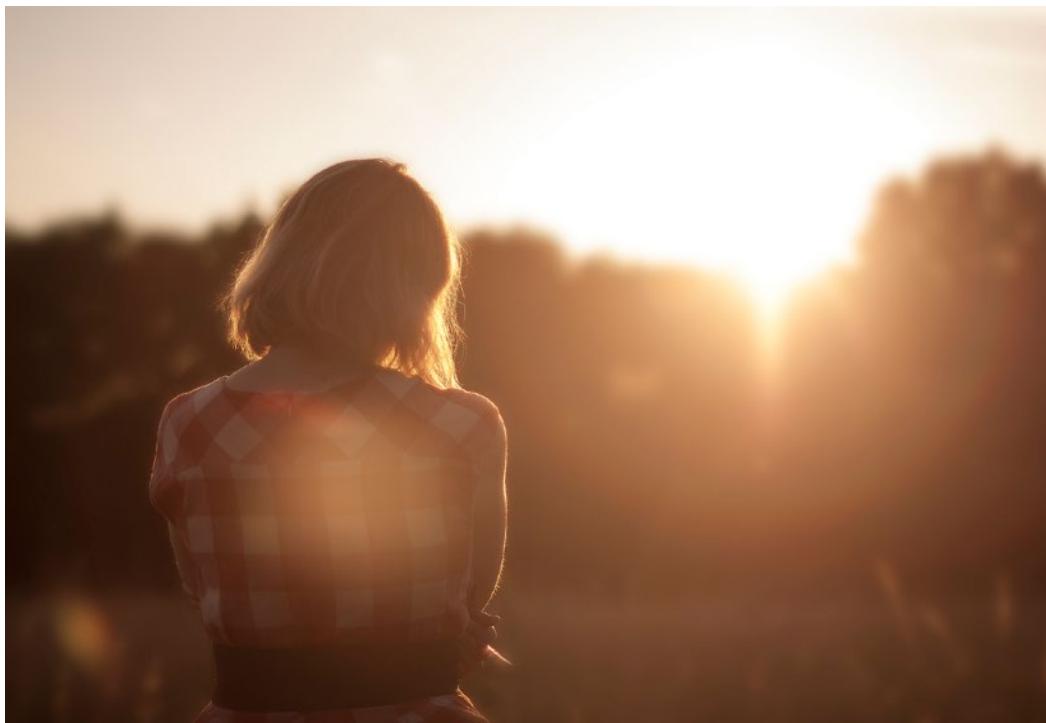
United States seats: Bob Dick, Mark Mickelson, Scott Ashley

## Monday Workshops and Plenary Sessions

There were a collection of plenary sessions Monday, with workshops following in the afternoon. Rex Sexton gave a presentation titled "Be Prepared for the Coming Emergency," where he encouraged the conference to have a mental checklist to be prepared for whatever the next crisis may be. Mario Seiglie presented "Seven Key Tools for Biblical Hermeneutics," explaining tools for ensuring accurate interpretation of the scriptures. Scott Ashley gave a presentation discussing the need to properly understand the context of any given scripture, using three commonly misunderstood examples, then giving resources and tools to turn to to dig out that context. Larry Walker explored the use of reference tools in a presentation titled "What's in Your Toolbox?" during an afternoon workshop. Pam Kuver led a concurrent ladies workshop titled "Birth Pains of Christian Women," and John Elliott finished up the afternoon sessions with a presentation titled "How to Labor in the Word Effectively While Shouldering Multiple Responsibilities."

After concluding remarks by Robin Webber and a final hymn, the conference ended. The Council of Elders convened Tuesday for its quarterly meeting. **UN**

# Does God Love Me?



by Pam Redline

“Does God love me?” It seems like a question with an obvious answer, but there will come times in life when we might doubt the answer. For so many, the answer is not a foregone conclusion. How can people understand God loving them when they don’t even know the love of a human father? A mother? Grandparents? Siblings? A spouse? A church? Or even a true friend? What is love anyway? Because many don’t know what real love is, they take the pieces of what has left them feeling good and weave those into something they believe might work. All too often, in the end it turns out to be another counterfeit. So many people go through life being let down again and again, and with time they learn to shut off their feelings alto-

gether. Experience tells them that to be vulnerable to somebody else puts them at risk for hurt; hurt piled onto past hurts.

We all crave the need to belong. To fill that craving for acceptance, some may fall into the tyranny of peer pressure, changing and conforming to a group’s chosen values in order to feel like part of something. If taken far enough it can lead to joining a gang—whether it is a violent street gang or simply a gang of people on the Internet. Gangs can be a place where people seek to find some form of acceptance and identity, especially those who have been emotionally abandoned. Yet the feeling of family in a gang only goes up to a point. Often instead of an open minded, two-way, lay-down-your-life-for-your-friend love, it is only a coun-

terfeit dependent on what the gang can get from you. Many gangs will take all it can get and leave nothing in its place.

For much of history, the world has been a very dark place. Superstition, false gods, false thought, lies, abuses of power, and brutality have been rampant. Apart from the light of Christ, there is no lasting hope, joy, peace, patience, love, or gentleness. If humanity rejects anything and everything to do with truth, God, and the true teachings of Jesus Christ, they switch off the Light.

## Enter the Creator God!

How do we best help people who are poor, bereft, heartsick, emotionally assaulted, broken, beaten, empty or prone to dysfunctional behavior to fill voids in their lives? How can we help them see the tangible, solid, life-giving, joyous, peace-filled, energetic love of God?

What simple and practical things can we do to help people begin to take baby steps toward greater understanding of God’s love for them and, ultimately, toward God’s Kingdom? Our job is to show people the love of God and Jesus Christ through our example. We are to mirror to them and lovingly help others to see who God and Christ are

One of the ways people may come to better see and understand that God loves them is when they see it in our congregations. Do they sense His love when they see us together? We must never underestimate the power of our example, our actions, or our words. We may be the only picture of God they have ever had in their world and that picture is vital!

I believe that people need to be gently and lovingly refreshed; we must include, invite and overwhelm them with patience. They need to be listened to. People need a safe place where they are wholly welcomed and completely supported as they grow. We must apply ourselves to offering them the fruit of the Spirit, that they may see the healing love of God. Those who are asking themselves, “Does God love me?” may not understand what seems so far away, so untouchable. It is part of our calling to help them see that the unequivocal answer—yes!

In my own life, when I asked myself the question, “Does God love me?,” another friend gave me some advice: Go to God in prayer and ask Him to show Himself to you. Don’t share that prayer with anyone else, so when the prayer is answered, you know that it is God’s direct answer. When I did that, He was very quick and very specific in answering my prayer. I call it my “Gideon moment.” That experience has served as a foundation for my faith, and impacts me to this day.

As we strive for growth, becoming more like Jesus Christ each day, we should be ready to show the unconditional love of God through our example to others. Who knows but that someone—maybe someone close to you who has been in the Church for many years—may see your example and more deeply feel that love of God.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). **UN**

*Pam Redline is a member of the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, congregation.*

# Do You Struggle With Self-Worth?

by Cody Martin

Most of my life I’ve struggled with my own self worth and feeling like I’m not good enough for anything or anyone. From close friends growing up and sometimes family, I’ve been put down a lot. I sadly took their comments to heart and believed them. I started listening to my inner critic saying things like, “I’m not good looking,” “I’m stupid,” “I’m going nowhere in life.” Sometimes I felt like I was worthless and that I had no point to live. I also felt like everybody was better than me and that they were too good for me.

In college I took a class called “on course.” It was a psychology-based class that started to change the way I thought about myself and how I looked at my life. It’s where I learned about the three voices that we all have talking in our heads: the inner defender who blames and degrades others, the inner critic who blames and degrades itself, and the inner guide who doesn’t play the blame game. The inner guide says the truth as best it can and also builds you up when you need it. The inner guide is the voice we should be listening to.

Even after this class I was still struggling with my own self-worth, so I started talking about my life with my pastor and also a close friend who I went to ABC with. I also took on a stronger and more heartfelt prayer life with God. Having these outlets where I could talk and get feedback helped me to deeply examine myself. I always

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*Through counseling and prayer God opened my eyes to help me see myself for who I truly am: a son of God called to be part of His family.*

esteemed others higher than myself, as it says to do in Philippians 2:3—but I took that scripture’s meaning to the extreme, devaluing myself instead of appreciating the value God places on me. After doing a study on the scripture, I learned that God (through Paul) was telling us to do an inward examination of the heart, which will

by default include our value in His eyes—and then to humble ourselves in service of others.

Through counseling and prayer God opened my eyes to help me see myself for who I truly am: a son of God called to be part of His family. I know I’m still not perfect, but I’m working on it. He showed me that I really do have value and a purpose in this life. God is where we get our true value from, not people or material items. God cares about all of mankind! Jesus Christ Himself told us Himself that we are of more value than the birds of the air and flowers and grass in the field (Matthew 6:26).

He loved the whole world so much that He gave His only begotten son (John 3:16). Some words of advice I give to those who struggle with self worth: Take yourself out of negative situations, find someone you are comfortable with to talk to about your life, the good and the bad. And most importantly pour out your heart to God and let Him bear the burden for you. You are awesome—God knows it, and so should you! **UN**

*Cody Martin is a member of the Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation.*

# Ecumenicalism

Continued from page 3

ties? At what cost?

Reciprocal cooperations and respect are imperative and transparent values in a civilized society. However, the ecumenical concept contradicts itself by attempting to achieve “unity in diversity” through the exercise of a kind of “love” that is not God’s love as found in the Bible. Let us examine ecumenicalism more closely.

## Unity and Love That Are Not Approved by God

Unity is desirable, but Jesus clearly commanded His disciples to be united in the truth, not deception. God’s people are sanctified in the truth, not by unity at any cost (John 17:19). Since the beginning of biblical history human beings have united themselves through deception, not in the truth, only to pay bitter consequences!

Adam and Eve were united in disobeying God. In Noah’s time people embraced corruption as a common way of life. Men were united in building the Tower of Babel. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were united in lust for sexual perversion, as well as a number of other sins (Ezekiel 16:49-50). The list of historical events, which have seen men united to build up their own social systems and their own empires (quite often at the expense of other peoples), is rather long. More recently even the Japanese, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were allied in their attempt to conquer other peoples and achieving the unification of Europe by military force.

Man’s nature has never changed since the Garden of Eden. What does this have to do with the current ecumenicalism? This is dark history repeating itself. Con-

stantine’s old empire is trying to rise again greater than before, this time under the motto of “unity in diversity.” “In the last days, all nations will gather together [will be united] to make war against Jerusalem” and “against the Lord of Lords” (Zechariah 12:3, Psalm 2:1-4, Acts 4:25-26). In other words, against all those who believe in the Bible or in God’s law.

Why would they be openly against the true God “in the last days”? Although sincere they are already being deceived by Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9). They are being united simply to rebuild their old empire, a super organized church, instead of searching for the Kingdom of God and His justice.

They have already overturned the

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*Unfortunately ecumenicalism boils down to people telling God, “We do believe you and pray to you, but don’t tell us how to live!” It speaks of unity and love, but it offends God by enslaving naïve people into idolatrous practices!*

order of priority of the two most important commandments: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36). Sadly, the “first” or “greatest” commandment—the one that summarizes the first four of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)—is no longer important to them.

“We do worship Christ,” they say. But does Christ bless those who have changed or abolished the law of His Father? Jesus said: “Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my

Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Unfortunately ecumenicalism boils down to people telling God, “We do believe you and pray to you, but don’t tell us how to live!” It speaks of unity and love, but it offends God by enslaving naïve people into idolatrous practices!

“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).

All those who try to achieve unity without obeying God’s law are part of the system called “Babylon the great,” the “prostitute on the beast,” as described in Revelation 17 and 13. God will make

their system collapse in the last days. That is why the Bible admonishes us not to conform ourselves to this world but rather to seek God’s Kingdom and His justice (Romans 12:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 6:17).

## Unity and Love That Are Approved by God

In John 17 Jesus Christ prays to the Father for His people to be united. But how? Lasting and harmonious unity can only be achieved through the love and Spirit of God (Romans 5:5), not by different spirits.

How can you discern the unity that is approved by God? “This is how we can be

sure that we have come to know God: if we continually keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). Therefore, “the person who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ but does not continually keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth has no place in that person...” (read also verses 4-6, emphasis added).

As ecumenicalism gets more and more threatening and aggressive against those who love God’s law, let us put on “the whole armor of God, that we may continue to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Let us remain “steadfast in the faith” and let us humbly remember that “for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Jesus clearly said: “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). Only the love of God is truthful, pure, unselfish, faithful, producing a long-lasting unity, based on perfect faith, judgment and mercy.

Genuine love and real unity can only come from God’s Spirit, and this is given “only to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:31; 1 John 5:2-3). God’s people are kept united in one mind, one baptism, one Spirit, one doctrine, one voice, one attitude, and one purpose (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:4,13; 1 Ephesians 4:14; Philippians 2:2). This is God’s way. This actually works and leads into God’s Kingdom. Blessed are those who walk in it. **UN**

# New UCG.org

Continued from page 1

are to someone trying to find out more about us as a church, the new site moves the Church’s outward-facing gospel-preaching content off of the “United Church of God” section of the website, and onto the *Beyond Today* section. The UCG section instead has explanations of who we are, what we believe, how we preach the gospel, what to expect if someone were to come to services, a link to find a congregation, links to sermons videos, and a link to our weekly Sabbath webcast. All of this is an intentional change for people who have no previous history with us to find out what we’re about and more easily answer God’s calling.

## 3. More deliberate focus on presenting the gospel message

As mentioned before, the Church’s media is no longer on the front page, instead being organized under the *Beyond Today* section of the site. What UCG has produced in its mission to preach the gospel over its two decades—*Good News* articles, *Beyond Today* episodes and BT Dailies, short films, booklets, blog posts, archived *Vertical Thought* issues and even old material such as *World News and Prophecy* articles—will all be under this section. The goal of this change is to make the

gospel message more easily identifiable and found. With the Church section being clearly defined, it’s also more obvious to someone who isn’t familiar with us that we are not just a media organization, we are a body of believers, and vice versa. It’s just a click away to find out more about the organization behind the media.

## 4. New congregation websites

Along with the other changes, we plan on slowly rolling in our local congregation websites so that they will all reside on UCG.org. That means that all the local congregation pages will be searchable and findable from the main site. Also, all sermons given in local congregations that are posted online will be findable at UCG.org. Perhaps best of all, the interface for maintaining the new local pages will be simpler for local volunteers who maintain them.

## 5. New members’ website

In the third quarter of the year, we also plan on integrating the members’ site into UCG.org. It will provide a much more seamless experience for our members looking for pertinent member content.

In the weeks since launch, we have gathered statistics for how people are using the site, which have shown that the changes we made are bearing good fruit. See the back page for some of the stats. **UN**

# Self-Control

Continued from page 14

only wanted to touch the bottle of juice. I didn’t mean to fall out of the cart and pull Farrah down. Is she okay?” It was a teaching moment for both Tiffany and myself. This instance showed me that by controlling my emotions, my actions and tone were much more loving than they would have been normally. And Tiffany’s response to me was also much more loving and cooperative than it would have normally been.

I found a quote by author Beth Moore, who said: “The key to self-control is the refusal to allow our enemies (the flesh—including behaviors and emotions, the world or Satan) to rule or hold us captive in any way. Self-control is our wall of protection. Our lack of self-control makes us vulnerable to attack from the enemy” (*Living Beyond Yourself*, Beth Moore, 2004).

Satan uses our lack of control over our emotions to cause hurt to others. Why does God want us to have self-control? Because it is a part of the very nature of God. He is controlled, disciplined and consistent. The Holy Spirit can bring that into our lives as well if we allow it to work within us. **UN**

# My Calling: Coincidences or Divine Plan in Action?

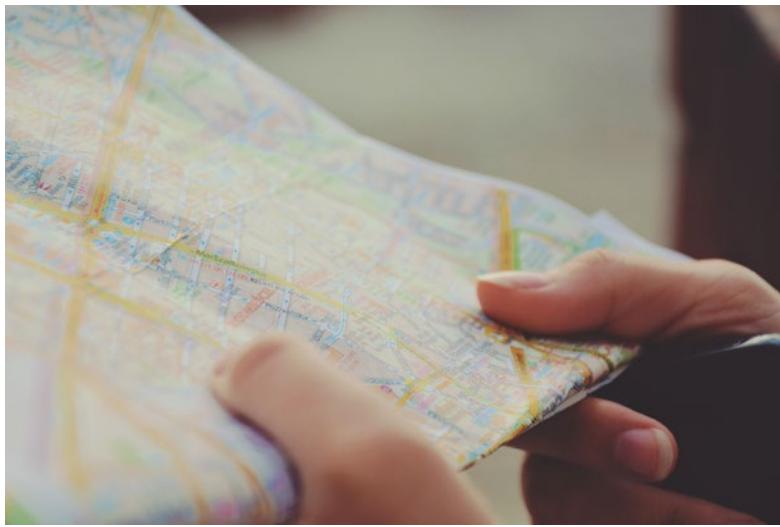
by Ray Amato

I hadn't attended any church for many years, living life the way I wanted to live it. Then 10 years ago at the age of 67, something happened that I didn't understand: I got up one morning, picked up my Bible, got in my car, and drove to our local Costco store. I parked at the far end of the parking lot where there were very few cars, and spent the next hour reading my Bible. I had absolutely no plans or intention to do this. I didn't think about doing this for one second beforehand.

I continued to do this on a daily basis for the next 10 years. Every day I couldn't wait to get there to spend that hour in God's Word. Each time it felt more like 10 minutes.

I learned a lot about what God had to say, which was a wonderful thing, but looking back I realize that this had to be only a first step in God's plan for me. During those 10 years of Bible reading I must have read the word "Sabbath" literally hundreds of times, but I just didn't get it. It was just a word that did not connect in my mind. I know now that this exact thing has happened and is happening to hundreds of thousands of Bible-reading people around the world.

Then seemingly out of the blue by e-mail, I re-established contact with an old friend, Mark Phillips. He and I once worked for the same company and were longtime friends, but we had not been in contact for a very long time. It turned out that he is a Sabbath keeper. I noticed that his conversation concerning his relationship with God was a whole lot different than mine. I heard words like: Sabbath, Passover, feasts, etc. These were words that



*I now believe that re-establishing contact with my longtime friend out of the blue was not just a coincidence. I believe that this was God's second step in my conversion.*

were not very familiar to me at that time, in spite of the fact that I had that 10 years of reading the Bible under my belt.

I now believe that re-establishing contact with my longtime friend Mark out of the blue was not just a coincidence. I believe that this was God's second step in my conversion. It reminds me of the story about Phillip teaching the eunuch. Philip asked the eunuch who was reading

the Bible, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the eunuch replied, "How can I unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:30-31).

I got on Google and typed in "Sabbath keeping churches in San Diego," and of course the United Church of God website was at the top of the list. I found the website to be extremely well done.

I believe this was God's third step in my conversion. Just reading this story as I've typed it out, it becomes very clear to me the events leading up to this were not just random coincidences, but were instead the deliberate and carefully thought out actions of the almighty God.

I see now that the 10 years of daily Bible reading were a part of God's plan. But it was only the beginning; more was needed. It brings to mind Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who

bring glad tidings of good things!'"

That's why we have God's Church. And that's why God has given us ministers and pastors to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God. Truly blessed is the person who has found the pearl of great price. **UN**

Ray Amato is a member in the San Diego, California, congregation.

## Job Openings

Continued from page 4

and/or graphic designer.

Primary responsibilities will be to design infographics, illustrations, posters, charts, jump-backs and graphics for *Beyond Today* television and magazine projects.

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) and one to two years' direct related experience is preferred, with training in communication and in using desktop publishing (Adobe InDesign) and photo editing (Photoshop, Illustrator) software. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a portfolio of their work.

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God.

For more information about the position, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org).

### Web Developer

The United Church of God has announced an opening for a Web develop-

er. The position will require the following:

- Custom programming and Web application development for Church websites
- Testing, maintenance and troubleshooting of existing Church sites
- Contributing ideas and efforts towards internal projects and working as part of a team to find solutions for various problems
- Other duties as assigned
- Required skills for this position include:
  - A solid understanding of PHP, AJAX, HTML, Javascript, and CSS
  - Familiarity with source control systems such as Git
  - Ability to communicate technical ideas to business users and other teams (design, QA)
  - Ability to both collaborate with team members and to work independently
- Eager to embrace current and emerging web technologies
- The following experience would give an applicant preference:
  - Knowledge of SEO coding best practices
  - Proficient in Drupal, including custom module development, key contributed modules and core API
  - Two-plus years of Drupal hands-on development experience
  - Experience integrating open source and third-party applications into

existing systems

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) is preferred. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a resume of their education and/or experience.

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God.

For more information about the position, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org).

### Web Content Editor

The United Church of God has announced an opening for a Web content editor. The candidate will work to train, support, troubleshoot, maintain, improve and advocate the best experience for users of the UCG online system. They will be an integral part of our content management system, helping authors publish content each day.

Candidates must have the following minimum qualifications:

Experience with content management software or proven background in work-

ing on websites, specifically initiatives that have a marketing and customer-focused aspect to them

Strong acumen in Web technologies and understanding of how functionalities such as HTML, XML, CSS can work together

Prior experience working with Web content management system tools and publishing processes

Customer-oriented approach and proven record of delivering solutions

A bachelor's degree (B.A.) in advanced computer skills and office duties is required. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. Experience working with databases, web-based applications, e-mail and general office duties is essential. Strong language, logic and communication skills, and algebra/geometry level math skills are required. Those applying for consideration and invited for an interview must supply a resume of their education and/or experience.

Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God.

For more information about the position, please contact [human\\_resources@ucg.org](mailto:human_resources@ucg.org). **UN**



Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>The Four Horsemen of Revelation</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Horsemen of Revelation</i>	May 8-14
<i>Sex, Sin and the Pursuit of Purity</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Transforming Your Life</i>	May 15-21
<i>Fasting and Prayer: Tools for Spiritual Growth</i>	Gary Petty	<i>Tools for Spiritual Growth</i>	May 22-28
<i>God's Plan for the Middle East</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Middle East in Bible Prophecy</i>	May 29-June 4
<i>Kingdoms at War: Powers of the Unseen World</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>You Can Understand Bible Prophecy</i>	June 5-11
<i>Is the Rapture Real?</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Rapture Versus the Bible</i>	June 12-18
<i>Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns</i>	June 19-25
<i>The Rich Man and Lazarus</i>	Steve Myers	<i>The Truth About the Rich Man and Lazarus</i>	June 26-Aug. 2



Periodicals Postage Paid at Milford, Ohio, and at additional mailing offices

UCG.org Relaunch Statistics

The first week after launch, we gathered some statistics from the website to see how the new site is doing. Compared below are a week's worth of data from before the relaunch and a week's worth of data after the relaunch. The overall visits to the site both weeks were approximately the same, so the numbers below give us a picture of how the new site is changing our visitors' experience.

Sermons page

unique visits  
new site: 9,662 vs. previous site: 2,829  
448% increase

average time on page  
00:03:13 vs. 00:01:08  
184% increase

Congregations page

unique visits  
14,779 vs. 3,930  
276% increase

average time on page  
00:01:02 vs. 00:03:52  
73% decrease

\*decrease likely due to use of the new search function on the page, rather than having to scroll to find a location

Beyond Today content

unique visits  
23,477 vs. 13,326  
76% increase

average time on pages  
00:03:36 vs. 00:02:26  
48% increase

\*this represents all Beyond Today content on the entire site taken in aggregate

ATTENTION ALL HIGH SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY AND GRADUATE LEVEL GRADUATES!

Send in a bio and photograph to be featured in *United News*.

We are going to feature the class of 2015 in the July-August *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by **June 5**. Also, please keep it to **250 words maximum!**

1. Graduate's name
2. Parents' names (if high school grad)
3. Congregation and pastor's name
4. School, work, internship, co-op or other accomplishments
5. Interests, interesting facts about your- self, Church activities you're involved in, hobbies, unusual skills, etc.
6. Plans after graduation
7. Additional comments (favorite scripture, favorite quote, motto, advice, poetry, wisdom, etc.)

Also include your phone number or e-mail address to use to confirm spellings, etc. (they will not be printed). Please send with a recent photo (conforming with biblical standards of modesty) of the graduate by **June 5**. Send by e-mail to: Mitch\_Moss@UCG.org. Or by mail to: United News, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. We may edit for clarity and/or length to meet the 250-word maximum length. Thanks and congratulations!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 15-17: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Spokane, Washington
- May 24: Pentecost
- June 6-7: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Greensboro, North Carolina
- June 12-14: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Allenspark, Colorado
- June 18-21: Troyer's Hollow Weekend Getaway, Charm, Ohio
- June 20-21: Focused Education Seminar, Milwaukee, Wisconsin