

# UNITED NEWS



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## Connecting With Brethren at the Feast of Tabernacles

Have you ever gone to the Feast of Tabernacles and were pleasantly surprised to see an old friend? Or maybe you bonded well with a brand new friend this year? Who did you connect with at the Feast this year?

Every year at the Feast we make an effort to meet new people, and we also reconnect with people we already know—our friends and spiritual family. God guides us at the Feast to connect in our relationships with our brethren and with Him.

This year many of us connected with our friends and spiritual family at various United Church of God Feast of Tabernacles sites around the world. In this issue of *United News* there are articles summarizing the wonderful times experienced at our UCG festival sites.

The reports are arranged by region, beginning on page 3. And there is a full-color photo centerfold beginning on page 13. If you would like to see these photos that were published—as well as many more that we did not have room for—please see the United Church of God Flickr page at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157665995179429>.

Adding to this sense of unity through connections, the Church ran the same hashtag campaign as last year across social media sites, encouraging Feastgoers to post photos using #ucgfot. You can still search #ucgfot on your favorite social media website to see the vast array of photos (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

Once again, the millennial spirit was felt amongst the brethren at the Feast as they fostered new and old relationships as one Body in Christ and rejoiced in the foretaste of the return of our Elder Brother Jesus Christ and His rule on this earth.

May God's Kingdom come quickly. **UN**



Davao, Philippines



Agra, India



Prince Edward Island



Oceanside, California



Merimbula, Australia

### Feast of Tabernacles

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## Change in Responsibility for U.S. Regional Pastors

by Chris Rowland

In January 2016, the United Church of God field ministry in the United States was reorganized from three regions to six regions. These six regions correspond to the six ministerial conferences that we schedule with our ministry over a two-year period.

Our regional pastors were nominated by the elders in each region and selected by Ministerial and Member Services (MMS) in consultation with the president. At the present time, our regional pastors are Steve Nutzman (Northwest), Mitch Knapp (North Central), Steve Myers (Northeast), Jim Tuck (Southwest)

Mark Welch (South Central) and Ken Martin (Southeast).

A few significant changes were recently made to the role of regional pastor, as approved by the Council of Elders at their August 2017 meetings. Most noteworthy is that the position of regional pastor is now a reporting line function between MMS and the field ministry. That means that the 75 church pastors in the United States will now report to their assigned regional pastor instead of directly to the operation manager for MMS.

We feel this change will be healthy and improve communication and advocacy for the needs of our ministers and mem-

bers. Some of our pastors have wished they could have more communication and someone to talk to more directly and frequently about their work.

A conference was held Sept. 10-11 in Omaha, Nebraska, with the six regional pastors in attendance along with president Victor Kubik and Chris Rowland, who serves as administrator for MMS. Discussions at the conference emphasized that the regional pastor is first a servant to the men in his region and is responsible to get to know the ministers and their wives. As representatives of the field ministry,

**Please see page 25**



Back row: Steve Nutzman, Mitch Knapp and Steve Myers. Front row: Jim Tuck, Mark Welch and Ken Martin.



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### BY THE NUMBERS

# 13,941

kept the Feast of Tabernacles around the world.

# UYC 2017 Report—Agaja Beach, Ojo, Lagos

Nigeria—July 23-30

The 2017 United Church of God Nigeria youth camp had 30 campers and 19 staff and was held Aug. 20-27. This camp experience will be remembered with joy and gratitude to the Almighty for the wonderful fellowship, activities, lessons, inspiring bonding and growth in the knowledge of His will for all in attendance.

There were various activities with each activity designed to pass on spiritual life lessons that can prepare the campers for a life of walking with God and growing in His knowledge and will. Deuteronomy 6:7 and 11:19 were well practiced as the Word of God was not only taught during compass check after breakfast, or in Christian living class after dinner, but during every activity and every opportunity throughout camp.

The theme of the camp was “Building Your Relationship With God,” with a sub-theme and action statement for each day. The sub-themes and action statements used were “God Is Calling—I Will Heed God’s Call,” “Building With Faith—I Will Build My Relationship With God Through Faith,” “Pray With Purpose—I Will Learn to Pray With Purpose,” “Learn From God—I Will Learn From God Every Day,” “Respond to God—I Am Committed to Having a Relationship With God.” The main theme and sub-themes were explained adequately with stories and

practical life scenarios to help the campers understand that God is calling each and every one of them because their parents/guardians are called, and they need to value this and respond and start working to build their personal relationship with God.

The camp activity kicked off on Sunday with a ride to the lagoon pier where for-powered fiberglass canoes/boats were used to ferry everybody on a 25-minute ride across the Lagos lagoon to the peninsula separating the river from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean that stretches across the West African region.

Activities included archery, swimming, volleyball, kickball, leatherworks, team challenge, tyrolean traverse (rope bridge), ASL (American Sign Language), line dances and Christian living. Every activity provided a lesson and message to take home and apply daily in our walk with God, but in my opinion, a resounding message for everyone was in archery: “When we set goals and come short of achieving them, never lose focus, never stop trying to reach the goal or aiming for the high mark!” It turned out the best and most gifted archer of the year, and since we have had archery at camp, was a 13-year-old girl, a first timer, shy and fearful, who at first did not even want to try.

The entire week was fun, educating,



Campers and staff enjoying their time at camp!

entertaining and inspiring. With a beautiful scenic environment at the location, camp had an atmosphere of pure joy, peace and tranquility with wonderful children of God. A movie night and a bonfire night respectively added even more to the joy of camp.

The Lagos congregation came across the lagoon to keep the Sabbath with the campers and staff. It was a wonderful Sabbath and provided opportunity for all the members to experience the serene and wonderful camp environment.

The camp ended with a banquet on Friday where campers had several presentations of dance, drama, music and a Bible

bowl. No one wished for camp to end, and everyone, even the first-timers, became friends and closer to one another, bonded by our calling and love of God.

By 9 a.m. on Sunday, camp was broken down and everyone was taken back to the pier. All staff and campers were able to return back safely to their respective church areas.

We are immensely grateful to our heavenly Father for another successful camp. It would never have been possible without His presence, Spirit and love in all.

Mary Williams

## Feast in Angola



A children's choir in Angola.

by Jorge de Campos

God's Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in Angola, a Portuguese-speaking southwestern African nation with over 28 million future children of God, tropical Atlantic beaches, a large network of rivers and a Sub-Saharan desert that extends across its borders into Namibia.

There were seven festival sites, namely in Malanje, Kuanza Sul, Huambo, Bailundo, Bie, Huila and Cunene, and the total attendance was 1,622 members. Note that a large number of brethren were not able to travel to the festival sites due to the very deep economic crisis affecting the country, causing great hardship, a high level of unemployment, physical illness and other

trials. These scattered members kept the Feast in their local congregations, guided by some of the leadership which, due to the same reasons, were not able to travel to the central festival sites.

The main themes highlighted during the Feast in Angola were the meaning of the high days during the Feast, the good news of the Kingdom of God, how to further grow spiritually, the role of families in the Church and in society, how to defend the faith, what the Bible says about tithing, family counselling and other Christian living topics.

All the Angolan brethren send warm Christian greetings to all of United's brethren around the world. **UN**

## German Preteen Camp



Campers and staff pose for a group photo at the German and Dutch camp in Germany.

In late July, the German and Dutch preteens and their families enjoyed an exhilarating five-day summer camp in the Eifel region of Germany. With 30 children and 30 adults in attendance, the focus of the camp was on building valuable friendships and set the tone for future preteen camps.

The children enjoyed structured morning and afternoon activities, including field sports, forest crafts, forest exploration, swimming, dance and music appreciation and team building challenges.

Interactive daily Bible studies were conducted by the pastor and other parents.

The idyllic location included a shallow creek, which was a focal point for play and adventure. The multi-lingual camp strengthened the bonds between the youngest church-goers as well as their parents, and plans are already underway for next year's summer camp. International campers and staff are welcome and enquiries can be made at [jkasper1@gmx.net](mailto:jkasper1@gmx.net).

Clair Kasper

# Feast of Tabernacles 2017

## FESTIVAL REPORTS



Copperbelt of Zambia, Africa



Tucson, Arizona



Nelson, New Zealand

See more 2017 photos here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157665995179429>

## Africa

### Benin, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast

A big hello from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Benin and Congo.

In all our respective countries there are political movements, strikes and popular uprisings, but beyond all this there was peace and security. However, on the Sabbath during the Feast in Kinshasa, Congo, a few vandals disrupted, but the police intervened in time to disperse them.

In all of these four countries we had a total of 90 participants; some were unable to attend this year.

Thank you very much for the financial assistance of the brothers and sisters who helped us to have activities, meals and transportation.

*Moise Mabout*

### Winneba, Ghana

This year was a special Feast in Ghana as all four UCG congregations—Accra, Agona, Kwanyako and Winneba—were combined at one site in Winneba, which is about an hour drive from Accra. All services were in English and Fante, the local dialect. Average attendance was a little over 200, with a high of 266.

Some members stayed at the Windy Lodge, which is about six minutes from the Feast site. The rest of the members were able to stay in tents and use facilities at the Feast site. Services were held in an open air structure at the Ghatehkrom Motel.

Activities for the Feast included: a couples dinner, soccer games, beach party and a tour of the Apostle Safo Suaye Technology Center. The Kantanka car is made here. One model is handmade, and they make about four a year. They also produce televisions, fire alarms and incubators. Many of the components are made from wood.

### Arranged By Region

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A favorite activity was the beach party with a variety of games, including tug of war and an egg race. No one wanted to leave since they were having such a good time together.

The Feast site had a very millennial setting, peaceful and family oriented. Messages included subjects of our future hope, staying alert, following Christ's example, striving for righteousness and stepping out of our comfort zone. We all left with a renewed zeal to endure to the end and pray "thy Kingdom come."

*Janet Keisel*

### Ogembo, Kenya

Every Feast of Tabernacles is unique, and this year's Feast was not an exception. During the eight days the members showed brotherly love. The Feast site is at an ever-green environment because of rain that is experienced throughout the year.

It's away from the capital city, located at the western part of the country. The first Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated here in 2011. The facility is one of the church properties in East Africa.

We had the opening service the first night of the Feast, and it was attended by 49 members. The number grew and reached 98, the highest was on Saturday and Sunday.

Bible studies, sermonettes and sermons were spiritually uplifting. We were blessed with 10 speakers, and two were from the United States. The international speakers took two days speaking both sermonettes

## FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE FIGURES 2017

<b>Africa</b>	<b>1,717</b>	<b>Caribbean</b>	<b>595</b>
Benin .....	22	Montego Bay, Jamaica .....	505
Cameroon.....	22	Reduit Beach, St. Lucia .....	90
DR Congo.....	20		
Winneba, Ghana.....	266	<b>Europe/British Isles</b>	<b>1,158</b>
Ivory Coast.....	28	Torquay, England.....	249
Lilongwe, Malawi .....	102	Kuressaare, Estonia .....	37
Blantyre, Malawi.....	104	Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France	168
Copperbelt of Zambia.....	95	Sabaudia, Italy .....	277
Kalukanya, Zambia.....	80	Schluchsee, Germany.....	188
Lusaka, Zambia.....	222	Greece .....	239
Got Kachola, Kenya.....	236		
Ogembo, Kenya.....	98	<b>Latin America</b>	<b>1,187</b>
Ukunda, Kenya .....	110	Cochobamba, Bolivia.....	18
Igbara-Oke, Nigeria.....	115	Boa Vista, Roraima, Brazil .....	56
Margate, South Africa.....	130	Olmue, Chile .....	105
Kpalimé, Togo .....	36	Cartagena, Colombia .....	105
Zimbabwe.....	33	Panajachel, Guatemala.....	223
		Puerto Vallarta, Mexico .....	680
<b>Asia/Pacific</b>	<b>1,537</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>7,059</b>
Merimbula, Australia .....	160	Bend-Redmond, Oregon .....	660
Sunshine Coast, Australia .....	400	Branson, Missouri .....	623
Rockingham, Australia .....	76	Cincinnati, Ohio .....	374
St. Helens, Tasmania .....	56	Glacier Country, Montana .....	311
Hong Kong, China .....	42	Jekyll Island, Georgia .....	534
Agra, India.....	45	Lake Junaluska, North Carolina...583	
Penang, Malaysia .....	88	Lake Texoma, Texas.....	463
Myanmar .....	35	Oceanside, California.....	484
Nelson, New Zealand.....	60	Panama City Beach, Florida.....	968
Baguio City, Philippines .....	154	Phoenix, Arizona.....	214
Davao City, Philippines .....	226	Steamboat Springs, Colorado .....	394
Visayas, Philippines.....	115	White Haven, Pennsylvania .....	354
Passikudah, Sri Lanka .....	72	Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin.....	638
Tonga.....	8	Satellite, Big Sandy, Texas .....	57
		Satellite, Tampa, Florida .....	38
		Satellite, Tucson, Arizona .....	21
		Home Sermon DVDs.....	343
<b>Canada</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,941</b>
Cochrane, Alberta .....	161		
Midland, Ontario.....	127		
Prince Edward Island.....	80		
Victoria, British Columbia .....	278		
Satellite, Blaineville, Quebec .....	30		
Satellite, Spencerville, Ontario.....	12		

and sermons, which were helpful and enriching.

The attendees contributed out of their second tithe money and food. The meals were delicious, prepared and served by professional cooks. After evening meals members fellowshiped around the fire. To top the joy of the brethren a big fat cow was slaughtered and cooked, and members ate meat to their satisfaction.

The attendees lived in tents and *bandas*. The *bandas* are still under construction, but they really helped. The first three days the weather was wonderful—nice and warm—and from the fourth day to last there was rain. The heavy downpour during the last two days disturbed those who lived in tents, and some joined brethren in *bandas*. The other members braved the situation to the end.

Water here is sometimes a big challenge because the site depends on harvested rainwater. Water was not a problem this Feast as there was water from beginning to end.

Well-wishers made this Feast succeed through their contributions, and we thank them very much. Many of the brethren promised to come next year. Above all we thank God who provided and made everything possible.

*Kriphas Ongori*

## Ukunda, Kenya

Kenya had three Feast sites, two in western Kenya, and one located at Ukunda in Diani, which is on the south coast of Kenya. The brethren were meeting at the Word of Life Center Hall.

Some of the local brethren were lodging at the center's apartments, while others were lodging at nearby apartments.

There were 11 internationals who were accommodated at the Southern Palms Hotel, which was about two kilometers from the Word of Life Center. All the facilities were fronted by beautiful beaches on the Indian Ocean.

The brethren, about 110 in number, enjoyed spiritual food about the Millennium, Kingdom of God and the Eighth Day, which was provided by two international pastors and five local pastors. This is not to forget the wonderful meals prepared at the center, which we all enjoyed.

Monte Knudson and David Meidinger briefly visited the other two sites in the west of Kenya. Activities included family day and a wonderful western style of roasting a whole cow buried in a pit underground, which we all greatly enjoyed.

We all enjoyed each other's fellowship, and when the end of the Eighth Day finally came we hardly wanted to leave each other's company. We all look forward to next year's Feast and hope for more internationals to join us as we worship the great God and seek to put Him first!

*Antonio Ndungu and Monte Knudson*

## Blantyre, Malawi

A new Feast site, new church hall and new environment characterized the 2017 Feast of Tabernacles in Malawi.

It was a joyous moment as the brethren observed this great event in Blantyre for the first time. This year's Feast made a great difference. Firstly, the Blantyre congregation converged on Malawi's Commercial Capital, Blantyre, where the UCG has its newly constructed hall. Heartfelt thanks to LifeNets International for making this dream come true. In the past such an event took place at Nkopola on the lakeshore district of Mangochi. This turn of events made everyone happy. Over a hundred brethren observed the Feast ranging in age from minors to those in their 80s. The Feast itself was filled with choirs, hymns, sermonettes, sermons as well as various activities. These activities included a senior citizens dinner, a children's treat, a variety show, sports and Feast dance. Brethren had a good time and a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. Members enjoyed several delicious meals prepared by the women, and they enjoyed eating and fellowshiping together.

The guest minister, Shannon Lucas from Texas, U.S.A., and the local pastor, Gracious Mpilangwe, touched on a number of subjects in the sermons they presented. It was about the Feast and what it pictures, the wonderful world tomorrow, how God will change both human and animal nature and bring in peace, harmony and life in abundance for all mankind. They also covered Christian living issues—how we can be light and salt to the world by the way we conduct ourselves. The sermons reactivated the spiritual growth in the minds of the brethren.

"I can't believe we are meeting in our own church hall. I'm happy to be around and witness this great moment!" said one longtime member who is 87 years old.

As everything came to a close, everyone looked forward to the next Feast with eagerness.

Yes, with a new place and environment, there were some challenges physical in nature. However the spiritual food surpassed all these challenges, and the Feast ended on a good note. It was regarded as one of the best Feasts ever.

*Osborne Liyawo*

## Lilongwe, Malawi

This year over 100 people gathered to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day in Lilongwe, Malawi. Local members were joined by four visitors from the United States. Lilongwe is the capital city located in the central region of the country. This busy city is an interesting mixture of government officials, NGOs providing various services to the country and local residents with many different backgrounds all going about

their business. The bustle of the city rarely stops, except in the middle of the night.

The Feast was held in an area of the city known as Mchesi, which is an unplanned residential neighborhood. The brethren met in the congregation's newly completed church building. Most of the brethren stayed in lodges within walking distance of the building. Although there were some difficulties with consistent electricity and water supply in the lodges and the church building, everyone thoroughly enjoyed fellowshiping together over several shared meals, group Bible studies, a family dance, a talent show and an afternoon of playing board games and card games.

The daily spiritual food and physical food was supplemented with feasting on God's creation in this beautiful country. Nearly everyone in attendance participated in two off-campus trips. The first trip was a day at Lake Malawi. The hot, sunny weather was made tolerable because of the cool water of the lake. The lake trip also included a *braai* (barbecue), a Bible study and a baptism of one of the young adults of the Lilongwe congregation. The second trip was to the Lilongwe Wildlife Centre, where families enjoyed a guided tour through the naturally wooded wildlife sanctuary where a small number of native African animals are cared for and rehabilitated.

This was truly a wonderful Feast with many brethren gathered together to learn more about God's coming Kingdom, to hear of many other brethren also keeping the same Feast all around the world, and to learn more about how to fellowship in unity before God.

*Lewis VanAusdle*

## Igbara-Oke, Nigeria

There were 115 brethren who observed an inspiring and encouraging Feast of Tabernacles at the Premier Holiday Resort in Igbara-Oke, Ondo State, Nigeria. People traveled from the various church areas and beyond to tabernacle together, fellowship and be taught and inspired by the Word of God. We were pleased to have Paul Moody (the regional pastor for English-speaking West Africa and pastor of the Spokane, Washington, congregation) and Guadalupe Gonzalez from Texas, keep the Feast with us this year. Everyone stayed at the resort and had meals together at lunch and dinner.

The Feast started with the opening night service on the Oct. 4, and pastor Oludare Akinbo introduced the theme for this year's Feast: "Building Your Relationship With God," taken from the UYC theme for the year.

We listened to inspiring messages from our pastors and other local speakers. The messages focused on building our relationships with God, what the Feast is all about, rejoicing in and enjoying the Feast, the great love and wisdom of God, the

coming Kingdom of God and so much more. Another highlight was the Feast video sermon by the Church's president, Victor Kubik, who spoke on "Understanding Suffering in Order to Rejoice." We had services every day except on Oct. 8, which was the sports and excursion day.

There were opportunities for games, various activities and lots of fellowship.

The Feast activities included children's, preteen and teen Bible classes, a preteen activity day, youth and general Bible studies, couples night, singles night, and sports (brethren enjoyed swimming, table tennis and various indoor games). Each afternoon, those members who were able came together to the hall, and we read through the entire book of Deuteronomy together, with adults and children taking turns to read 5 to 10 verses each. It was exciting and very educational, even to those who had done this before in the local congregational Bible reading programs or privately.

There was an excursion to the farm owned by the resort, and we also had the family fun/talent show night where there were presentations of special songs, drama skits, dances, lots of laughs, and a special delicacy of goat meat was served.

During the Feast, there were special music pieces done by both the senior and children choirs. We also had two little children who were blessed. On the first and last days of the Feast, group photographs were taken.

These eight days once again gave us a foretaste of the time in God's Kingdom. It was fulfilling both spiritually and physically (as the Feast provided an escape from the stress of the world). Our thanks to all those who contributed to the success of this year's Feast.

*Uwala Moses Oluwagbemiga*

## Margate, South Africa

The Feast was held once again in Margate in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province on the shores of the warm Indian Ocean.

There were 130 happy, relaxed Feastgoers who enjoyed cool weather, some rain and a rather fierce storm that did not in any way detract from the enjoyment and appreciation of the overall experience or the activities.

Messages were well prepared, well received and profitable. Fellowship was outstanding and all activities were exceptionally well attended.

A welcome cheese and wine evening was held after the opening night service and was judged to be highly successful. A seniors lunch and youth activity were both held after services on the same day and were most enjoyable.

A family dinner/dance with live music was particularly popular and well organized.

The family day featured a South African speciality with two lambs on rotating spits being the focus of attention.

Thank you everyone for your hard work and your input in so many ways that made this a very special Feast of Tabernacles.

*Roy Demont*

## Kpalimé, Togo

In a spirit of friendship, humility and service, the Feast in Togo was kept once again in the extraordinarily beautiful area of Kpalimé, about 120 kilometers from the capital city, Lomé.

With 36 people attending, we were blessed with edifying and very encouraging messages geared in part on the spiritual development of the youth and the children and on the importance of the role of parents in teaching their children while making sure they themselves are models for their descendants.

We had a visit to a beautiful waterfall about 20 kilometers away from Kpalimé, and we also did an outreach program to a school for the blind where we donated bags of rice and some soap.

We thank God and all those, either locally or far away, who have contributed to the success of this Feast.

*Kossi Fiaboé*

## Copperbelt of Zambia

A stage surrounded with luscious plants and a beautiful banner depicting a lion, a lamb, happy children and text from Isaiah 11:6-7 greeted us into the Feast of Tabernacles on the sunny Copperbelt of Zambia. The high attendance of 95 celebrated the Feast physically and spiritually.

We kicked off with a welcome film titled “It Won’t Be Long Now,” with a lion in the foreground, followed by inspiring message from our president. We then went into our first sermon of many.

Subjects included: “Our Focus on the Future Kingdom of God,” “What God Expects Us to Do at the Feast,” “Are You Ready to Enter the Promised Land?” The sermon “Have the Heart of a Lion to Trust in God” included loud sounds of a roaring lion. “Created in the Image of God” was followed by the hymn “Be Now My Vision.” Our final sermon on the Eighth Day was about the amazing grace of God in relation to the offer of salvation to all those of the second resurrection. During the sermon we listened to the hymn “Amazing Grace” sung by Judy Collins.

People came from all over: Chipata (1,000 kilometers away), Congo, Solwezi, Mufumbwe, Manyinga and South Africa.

Activities included: a Bible quiz, an activity afternoon (where much fun was had painting faces into lions and lambs and making lion and lamb masks), a film, a sports day, farmers lecture, a fun show,

a ladies meeting, a Bible study, and one evening where some members joined the Pringles around a bonfire for a barbecue on their game farm.

*Derrick and Cherry Pringle*

## Kalukanya, Zambia

The Kalukanya Feast site is about 1,000 kilometers northeast of Lusaka, Zambia. It is one of the three Feast Sites in Zambia. This year 80 people attended the Feast both from Isoko and those in Kalukanya.

The Feast is one of the most exciting festivals. Many people were very happy as they enjoyed food—which was plenty—and wonderful messages. On the first day of the Feast we had a service in the morning with 80 people in attendance.

Among the activities that took place was a family day with sports activities. There was a women’s day that was equally exciting as ladies exchanged gifts. The Feast had one incident where deacon Patrice Sinyenga was bitten by a snake. He was hospitalized but is now recovering well.

The Eighth Day had 78 people in attendance. We were enjoying ourselves so much we did not want the Feast to come to an end.

Finally, on behalf of the two congregations, Kalukanya and Isoka, we would like to thank those who helped fund this Feast, namely the home office and the brethren who contributed financial support. May God bless the Colorado and the California brethren for their kindness and love.

*Alfred Siame*

## Lusaka, Zambia

The Lusaka Feast site was attended by 222 people well above the earlier projected figure of 170 people. Last year 170 people attended the Feast, and that was the first time we held the Feast at the Verino Feast site.

The site was characterized by peace, harmony and rejoicing in meeting both the old and the new brethren who came from various areas of Lusaka region—Itumbwe, Mapoko, Nalubanda North, Kasumpa, Namukombo, Mwembeshi, Chipata and Lusaka.

The opening service was held on Oct. 5 with two services, morning and afternoon. Major Nawa Talama spoke at the morning service with about 182 people in attendance. The title of his sermon was “Why Do We Rejoice at the Feast?” In the afternoon deacon Luke Banda offered a sermon titled “The End of Suffering.”

On the Eighth Day, 192 people attended the morning service.

We would like to mention that numerous activities took place during the festival. Baptism class was conducted for 20 repentant people who wanted to be baptized. However, this event never took place because our pastor Major Talama was twice rushed to the hospital and sadly admitted

at Maina Soko Military Hospital where he stayed with his wife until the Feast ended. We are happy that he recovered.

Many thanks to the other Talamas for their tireless contributions, which made this year’s Feast a success.

Other festival activities included festival youth instruction conducted daily for the children and preteens. Tabo, Mukumbuta and Thoko were involved in teaching. Special music was given by the preteens and the youths during services. It was exciting listening to the kids’ special music. Different congregations equally gave their special music.

Family day was such a wonderful activity that took place. Seniors lunch was also not left out; elders equally ate, drank and enjoyed themselves. There was a women’s day, and leaders’ wives also met to discuss what their role in the Church was.

Finally, we send our very special thanks to the following: the home office for helping fund the Feast in the Lusaka region, and the Colorado and the Californian brethren for their financial support through LifeNets International. We ask our God to bless them abundantly for sharing their tithes with us in Zambia.

The 2017 Feast was successful, as all of us enjoyed the festival.

*Banda Luke and Phiri Morris*

## Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe

The Feast of Tabernacles in Zimbabwe was held at the beautiful and scenic Lake Chivero in the national park, about 37 kilometers from the capital city Harare. High attendance was 33 people, of which 27 are baptized members

of the United Church of God. Two new people were baptized during the feast: Saziso Tshuma and Rosemary Banda.

Activities included soccer and fishing. The Lake Chivero park is famous for game viewing of zebras, antelope, giraffes and the great white rhinoceros.

Weather was cool and breezy throughout the Feast. What a blessing it was! We had live sermons that were delivered by the local elder and deacons. This was one of the best Feasts ever!

*Mabasa Chichaya*



**Hong Kong, China**

## Asia/Pacific

### Merimbula, Australia

The land was uncharacteristically dry, inland to the coast, as we drove to the Feast. On our return, after some much-needed rain, the browns of winter had changed to lush greens. This transformation reflected both the impact of the Feast messages, which focused on renewal and the truth of God’s Word, in both general instruction and prophecy, as the world turns from Satan’s way to God’s way.

Excitement was high on opening night, and the joy continued as 160 people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day at the seaside resort of Merimbula on the Sapphire Coast of New South Wales. The weather was mild and mostly sunny. Festival activities embraced

everyone with warmth, fellowship and good food.

In keeping with the site’s reputation for hospitality, there were many get-togethers—open-house events, dinners and exploring the local attractions. From the window of their apartment at Tura Beach, one couple counted 64 humpback whales this year. The flowers, including dramatic red waratahs, were lovely, and the three choirs—including the children’s choir—sang beautifully. One solo piece of special music left everyone in awe and made some men cry unashamedly.

Members commented on the love, the thoughtfulness and the inclusiveness demonstrated at the Feast and how good it was to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

One special feature this year was a



Sunshine Coast, Australia

“buddy system” established during the sermonette on the first Holy Day. The speaker provided everyone with an envelope containing the name of someone in the congregation. We had to “check in” with our “buddy” every day of the Feast, and were also encouraged to write a one-word summary of each day on a white board set up in the tea/coffee area. The whole idea was enthusiastically embraced and helped bring people together in a wonderful spirit of fellowship.

The sermons brought inspiring, rich and fulfilling spiritual food to this wonderful Feast. Justice, mercy, faith and keeping God’s law, as well as the need to have our hearts attuned to God’s heart, and how they all—with peace and unity—direct us in helping the world enter the Millennium, were an ongoing theme. As one member said of this, his first Feast: “I’ve learned so much—it’s been amazing, inspiring, full-on! I can’t wait for the next one.”

*Mavis Miller*

## Rockingham, Australia

The Feast of Tabernacles in Western Australia was celebrated once more at Rockingham, a coastal city 45 minutes south of Perth. The friendly and harmonious gathering met at the Gary Holland Community Centre, a central, well appointed modern facility. Local speakers were the region’s pastor and festival coordinator Grant Chick, deacon Peter Davidson and Jean-Jacques Matter from the Bunbury congregation.

Visiting speakers were Richard Chapman from Melbourne, Matthew Fenchel, an elder from Cincinnati, and Ken Thomson, an elder from San Antonio, Texas. The Fenchels spent the first four days of the Feast in Rockingham and then traveled the 4,300 kilometers or 2,240 miles to Queensland for the remainder of the Feast. The Thomsons spent three days in Rockingham before travelling back to Queensland. It was a lot of traveling for both couples, who were much appreciated for their support.

Mr. Fenchel opened the Feast with a sermon about hope. Other sermons and

sermonettes covered topics such as: “We Are God’s Adopted Children,” “Living in Booths,” “We Are Here to Honor and Obey God,” “Keep Calm and Carry On,” “Having a ‘Hesed’ Relationship With God,” “A Covenant, Not a Contract,” “Discipleship and Rulership in Christ’s Dominion,” and “The Last Great Day.” A memorable quote attributed to Mark Twain was: “Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf man can hear.”

A talented local teenager, Kimberley Grey, provided piano accompaniment for hymns and special music throughout the Feast.

After the service on the first day was the traditional meet-and-greet catch up with friends old and new and the enjoyment of a wide variety of food and drink. Another activity also enjoyed by many was a bus trip 68 kilometers north of Rockingham to AQWA, the Aquarium of W.A., sited at Hillary’s Boat Harbour, to visit Australia’s largest single aquarium and walk-through underwater tunnel.

Another tradition, accompanied by chocolate, was a competitive night that was fun for old and young. This year it was won by two of the young ones. The Eighth Day service ended with the last hymn being the traditional “God Be With You.” The Eighth Day farewell lunch concluded in the hall after a group photo was taken.

*Leone Schreuders*

## Sunshine Coast, Australia

We had a high of 400 in attendance at the Feast on the Sunshine Coast, a resort area a short drive north of Brisbane. This was a pure beach experience with most accommodations on the beach front or within a few minutes walk.

Plenty of cafes and restaurants provided quick snacks or great dining experiences. The weather was perfect this year as usual. Many took the opportunity to walk along the pristine beaches.

Each day our services provided enlightening and powerful messages about God’s great plan to produce children for all eternity. They certainly captured God’s pur-

pose and were continually commented on during the Feast. We felt an intimacy with the mind of God in these clear messages.

Our activities were well attended—brethren wanted to be with each other and share their personal walk with God. A special mention goes to Mark Graham, composer of a number of our hymns, who teamed up with Geoff Robertson to present a tribute to John Denver with their rendition of Denver’s songs. These two musicians contributed magnificently to the whole Feast with memorable special music.

This is our 12th year at this location, and all is going well. We will be back there next year and the foreseeable future.

*Bill Bradford*

## St. Helens, Tasmania

For the fourth consecutive year, the small east coast town of St. Helens was the Tasmanian site for this year’s Feast.

Festival elder Matthew Sieff opened and closed the Feast by asking the question, “What is your reason for being here?” He went on to provide the answer: “Because a holy God has called a holy people to a holy purpose.”

Subsequent sermons expanded on this theme, with the emphasis being on leaving the allurements and attractions of this world behind as we strive to complete the spiritual training program which will result in our becoming teachers and rulers in God’s Kingdom. The qualities needed to achieve this goal are summarised by Psalm 89:14: “*Righteousness and justice* are the foundation of Your throne; *mercy and truth* go before Your face” (emphasis added). In various ways, these attributes were emphasised by those delivering Feast messages.

The St. Helens site attracted transferrees from New Zealand, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. For four newly baptised interstate members, it was an especially significant festival: their first observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Most of those attending church in Tasmania are senior citizens. The influx of Feast visitors brought with it a more youthful element, ranging from preteens to young adults. And an adorable one-year-old, Samuel Edge from Victoria, instantly acquired a range of “aunts” and “uncles” he had never met before!

Feastgoers were able to take part in several activities, including a pizza and movie night, a trip to the factory and cafe of a local prize-winning cheesemaker, a seniors luncheon and an Eighth Day mid-day meal. The “tea and coffee corner” at the Feast venue was a very popular focal point for lively fellowship for the entire eight days.

The closing hymn for the final service was also a fervent congregational prayer: “God Be With You.”

*Elizabeth Burchard*

## Hong Kong, China

This year 42 brethren from Hong Kong, Australia, Ireland, mainland China and various areas of the United States, gathered in Hong Kong to observe the Feast of the great God. The tourism board in Hong Kong likes to say “Best of all, it’s Hong Kong,” and it was indeed best of all. God inspired and blessed the messages.

Among the brethren warm affection and laughter were present throughout the Feast. The weather was unseasonably warm during the day and pleasant at night.

Additionally, on the Eighth Day, Connie Chen from Harbin, China, was baptized. She is believed to be the first person from mainland China baptized in the modern era of the Church. The Eighth Day of the Feast is a tremendous time of joy and celebration in what it foreshadows in our loving Father’s great plan. Connie’s baptism added to the joy of that day.

We are thankful to our loving God for the blessing of being able to observe His Feast, to rejoice before Him, and for His protection and many blessings.

*Terry Franke*

## Agra, India

There were 45 people who were invited by God to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Agra, India, this year.

Since day one we felt the presence of God and His interest for all of us attending this Feast site. We soon realized how great of a host He is.

The messages were like meat in due season for all of us. We had special music and Sabbath school every day of the Feast.

Almost every attendee participated and served in one way or another. Many of them helped with translation, and almost everyone participated in the variety show. Many others helped collect offerings, performed offertory music, the sound system, setting up the projector and screen for the Feast video, etc.

Some local members hosted the brethren in their own homes. It was an amazing experience to see all of these people come together as a family to celebrate the best Feast ever.

We had many opportunities to visit historic sites, including the famous Taj Mahal, considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world.

We enjoyed great food, not just at the multiple buffet-style restaurants of the hotel, but also at a grill and barbecue restaurant located within walking distance of the hotel. We all enjoyed the barbecue meal, especially the children who soon discovered the ice cream bar with more than 12 flavors to choose from.

Every night, many gathered together in the lobby or at their dinner tables and stayed up really late, talking about God

and His great love for all of us.

It was great for us (visitors) to visit our brothers and sisters in India and see how great our God is that can bring His people together to the place He has chosen to have a little taste of His coming Kingdom.

What a great responsibility we have with one another—it is through experiences like this that we can see how magnificent the Word of God is as found in Matthew 22:36-40: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “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. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

We encourage you from the bottom of our hearts to visit this site next year and share your many blessings with our family in India. For more information regarding the Feast in 2018, e-mail david\_schreiber@ucg.org.

*Roberto Parada*

## Penang, Malaysia

The venue for the Feast in Penang was the lovely Bayview Beach Resort, situated on the water's edge at Batu Ferringhi Beach. With everyone staying together on site, many meals and hearty fellowship was enjoyed by all. Highest attendance was 88, with brethren traveling from the U.S., UK, South Africa, China, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Australia to share God's Feast together.

This year we were blessed with a number of family groups in attendance, which greatly added to the energy level at the Feast and meant we were able to hold teen and preteen Bible studies for the first time in many years. Throughout the Feast God's blessing was certainly upon us. We received inspired Feast messages from eight speakers from three different countries, encouraging us to consider how choices and decisions we make today prepare and train us for the very real and practical opportunities to serve in the years ahead.

Special music presentations were a wonderful highlight, greatly contributing to our focus on God's purpose and plan. We also enjoyed some great activities. They included: a meet-and-greet session following the first Holy Day service, a mini-Olympics family and games night where peals of laughter and delight rang out through the evening, an amazing race where participants worked in teams to follow clues and hints and discover how to attain the goal, a bus tour to Penang Hill and Botanic Gardens to experience much of the flora and fauna of Penang, and the traditional group buffet meals on the evening of the seventh day and the Eighth Day luncheon. God blessed the weather as well, with each day being perfectly suited

to the organized activities.

In summary, we are very thankful to our great God, who blessed us with the precious opportunity to attend His Feast and to experience a wonderful spirit of peace and unity as we were taught and reminded about God's wonderful plan for all mankind. We look forward, with great anticipation, to the fulfillment of these wonderful days!

*Paul Vaughan*

## Sakhanji, Myanmar

This year saw 35 members have their first UCG Feast in Myanmar (Burma) in the village of Sakhanji, where the first member, Saw Laybeh, received his first Plain Truth in 1962, but was unable to have a personal visit and baptism till 1982. Sadly he died in 2002. Most of the members are related to him. His son, Davidson Laybeh, baptized in 1991, whose family had immigrated to Sheffield England under the refugee program for Karen tribe families, returned under a 28-day visa to coordinate the site and act as translator.

The site was about a five-hour drive into the delta region southwest of the Yangon, capital of Myanmar. The members stayed in the village, an hour's long-tailed boat ride up the river. As foreigners aren't allowed to stay in the village overnight by government regulation, we stayed in the San Pya hotel in Myoungmya and took a 10-minute open tuk-tuk (extended motorcycle) with the hour boat ride each way for services.

Davidson's family had arrived a couple weeks before the Feast and bought a small piece of land. He and members constructed the tabernacle the week before the Feast. The bamboo frame and woven roof structure is where we had services each day. There was a battery-operated PA system and keyboard for hymns and special music. Davidson had created a hymnal in local Sanskrit text for members to sing our hymns. He also translated my sermons into Karen.

He had been transcribing UCG sermons from Sheffield, England, to send to them for the last couple years. We had breakfast and lunch in the village at a member's home and enjoyed the fellowship and tour of the village. On Sabbath, Oct. 7, I ordained Saw Law Eh as deacon and baptized Naw Thi Su into the Body of Christ.

Davidson had made a request of president Victor Kubik for an elder to conduct the Feast since he would be there to translate and Myanmar had relaxed its policy to allow the 28-day visas for foreigners. Davidson's daughter Elizabeth translated English to Karen and Naw Thi Su from Karen to Burmese to allow us to eat in the restaurants in the evening. No one in town spoke English, so the two girls saved us from sign language and pictures.

The unique Feast, although rustic, was



a spiritual and physical success for these isolated members.

*Aaron and Michelle Dean*

## Nelson, New Zealand

Sixty brethren enjoyed the wonderful South Island of New Zealand for the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful resort town of Nelson. Nelson is a popular destination for New Zealanders and foreigners alike. Located on Nelson Bay, this site offers panoramic views, majestic mountains, ocean excursions and picturesque wineries.

The brethren enjoyed eight days of spiritual enrichment and personal rest from the cares of this world. The children were treated to two Bible classes and also a special “Jelly” afternoon with videos, activities, coloring books, gifts and t-shirts. It was a big hit.

During the middle of the Feast, the entire congregation enjoyed a full afternoon aboard the Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle, visiting historic sites and secluded beaches. Hiking on remote trails was enjoyed by many, as were the views of seals and other wildlife along the way. In addition, one other afternoon a “women's high tea” was enjoyed by 16 of the ladies for several hours at the historic Melrose House mansion.

New Zealand is a great spot on God's earth for the Feast. Plans are already underway for next year's exciting location!

*Peter and Terri Eddington*

## Albuera, Leyte, Philippines

A total of 115 attendees enjoyed God's Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day celebration this year at Baybayon ni Agalon (the Master's Shore) in Albuera Leyte, one of the three festival sites in the Philippines. All congregations in the Visayas region together with some guests from other islands of the country and from the U.S. gathered for the fourth time in this beautiful nature-inspired resort filled with wonderful sceneries which indeed gives a foretaste of God's coming Kingdom.

Inspiring and spiritually uplifting messages, hymns and special music were among the activities that were looked forward to by everyone at the Feast. Average daily attendance in each day's church service reached 112.

Aside from the spiritual aspect of Christian life, the Feast also focused on enhancing family bonds and promoting friendship among the members and guests who were gathered. Activities such as acquaintance night, seniors social, youth and singles day and family and sports day were among the ones that took gigabytes of phone and camera storage all capturing the happy moments and experiences that were truly memorable!

The aspect of educating the brethren hasn't been left out as well. On certain days of the Feast, lively seminars as well as Bible forums for the membership and the youth respectively were conducted. Guests also had the opportunity of visiting different historical sites in the Island of Leyte including Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda Memorial, San Juanico Bridge and MacArthur Park/Leyte Landing Memorial.

Sumptuous food was also a highlight and was made even more enjoyable with the brethren having fellowship after meals. Special dinners were also served for the seniors and the servant leaders of the region prepared by members who had skills and training as chefs.

With the guidance, inspiration and protection of the Almighty God and the active participation of members who were assigned in different committees, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day celebration in the Visayas region of the Philippines was a great success!

*Jose T. Campos*

## Baguio City, Philippines

Baguio City was once again one of the three Feast of Tabernacles sites for the United Church of God here in the Philippines. For the 17th consecutive time, the Feast was held at the Ang Ating Tahanan grounds of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines located at the South Drive in Baguio City. We have again been given the oppor-

tunity to use their multi-purpose hall for the sixth time since 2012.

The Feast started with our traditional opening night service on the evening of Oct. 4 with the message delivered by the coordinator for the Baguio festival site reiterating the importance of learning the fear of God during the Feast. The highest attendance we've had during this Feast was 154 on the second day of the Feast.

We were privileged to have with us two visiting elders during the Feast: the pastor of the Oklahoma churches, Ed Dowd and his wife RaeAnn and their family, as well as David and Kim Nunn.

The messages were uplifting, inspiring and encouraging. The pre-recorded sermon from our president, Victor Kubik, titled "Understanding Suffering in Order to Rejoice," was downloaded in time and was viewed and listened to by the brethren as the main sermon on the sixth day.

The festival show this year was held on the fourth day. The festival show featured festive songs and dances from a number of countries from around the world. Featured among others were of course native Filipino songs, popular music and classic folk dances, which always included the famous local folk dance called the *Tinikling*. A good number of our overseas brethren were given the opportunity to experience *Tinikling*, which added to the enjoyment and fun of everyone.

Various wholesome activities were prepared and enjoyed both by the young and the once-young alike as well as the whole family, where everyone had the opportunity to enjoy fun, food, fellowship and games. Among the activities were: the youth day activities for the preteens and teens held on the second day, the seniors dinner on the third day hosted again by our teens and young adults, and the family day activities on the fifth day. Because we had a good number of overseas brethren and other first-timers to Baguio, we had two afternoons devoted to touring the city. Interested brethren had the opportunity to visit the city's historic and scenic spots while experiencing the ride on local passenger "jeepneys."

With the spiritually inspiring messages, the warm fellowship, the spirit of service and outgoing concern the brethren shared and experienced here, everyone felt they were blessed by our great God with a deeper level of spiritual understanding of the joy, unity, love and togetherness. We all look forward to in the Kingdom. This Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day will be remembered as one of the most joyful and spiritually fruitful ever.

*Rey Evasco*

## Davao, Mindanao, Philippines

Once again, brethren from all over Mindanao converged at GSP Camp

Alano, Toril, Davao City, for this year's Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day. There were 226 attendees who registered, including two visitors from Australia. We were blessed with the presence of our assistant senior pastor in the Philippines, David Dobson, who was visiting with his wife, Denise. Their spiritual contribution left us all uplifted. They were here for the first half of the Feast.

The weather was beautiful with warm, sunny days from day one to the end of the Feast, which allowed members to truly enjoy.

In addition to the daily morning services, afternoon activities included livelihood workshops; children, youth and singles activities; a seniors' social; a family sports day with fruit festival and native delicacies; a Bible study on the Sabbath afternoon conducted by Mr. Dobson; and our foreign guests toured the Philippine Eagle Park, the country's bird sanctuary.

One of the highlights of the Feast was the variety show. Each congregation did an outstanding job in providing an evening of entertainment for the festival attendees. This event is one of the most memorable parts of the Feast.

The Davao Feast venue fostered closeness and unity as the Feastgoers stayed in one area exclusive to the brethren. The brethren ate meals together in the cafeteria, which provided a wonderful opportunity for more fellowship.

Our festival theme, "Understanding Suffering in Order to Rejoice," was well expounded by Victor Kubik in his festival message. The festival theme encouraged us to keep our focus on the wonderful world tomorrow, when everyone will dwell in peace and harmony and where human suffering will have become a thing of the past.

At the end of the Feast before we leave the hall, we all sang a parting song, "For the Beauty of Earth." Most of the brethren were deeply touched and were in tears. We truly felt like members of one large family anxiously looking forward to our next festival reunion. We earnestly pray God speed that day!

*Raul Villacote*

## Passikudah, Sri Lanka

A joyous Feast was held at the Amaya Beach Resort on the east coast of Sri Lanka. There were 72 brethren who rejoiced and worshiped God together for eight wonderful days. Inspiring messages, close family camaraderie and delicious shared meals at the hotel restaurant buffet were hallmarks of the Feast. Staying together in the same resort and having daily meals together yielded a millennial atmosphere as Sri Lankan and overseas brethren grew to love one another and soon became like family.

The messages during the Feast were both encouraging and thought-provoking.

Sri Lankans and visitors alike enjoyed many Feast activities: a fun-filled family day with a wide variety of team games and challenges, a variety show displaying participants' talents and humor, an exciting game of cricket, a family dance with activities for young and old and some great splashes in the pool with friends.

A Feast tradition continued on "saree day," as the ladies dressed in sarees of a variety of beautiful colors and patterns for the Sabbath. Visiting members were encouraged to participate, and the local ladies supplied extra sarees for all to wear.

A safari excursion to the Kaudulla National Park was also enjoyed during the Feast for all brethren. We rode in jeeps through round terrain as herds of wild elephants were spotted throughout the adventure.

The 2017 Feast in Sri Lanka was uplifting and fulfilling for all. God's people were encouraged to press toward the goal of His Kingdom in every aspect of their lives this coming year.

For those interested in enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime experience in a part of the world many seldom visit, you are encouraged to come to "the Pearl of the Indian Ocean" and rejoice with your brothers and sisters at the Feast in 2018.

*David Schreiber*

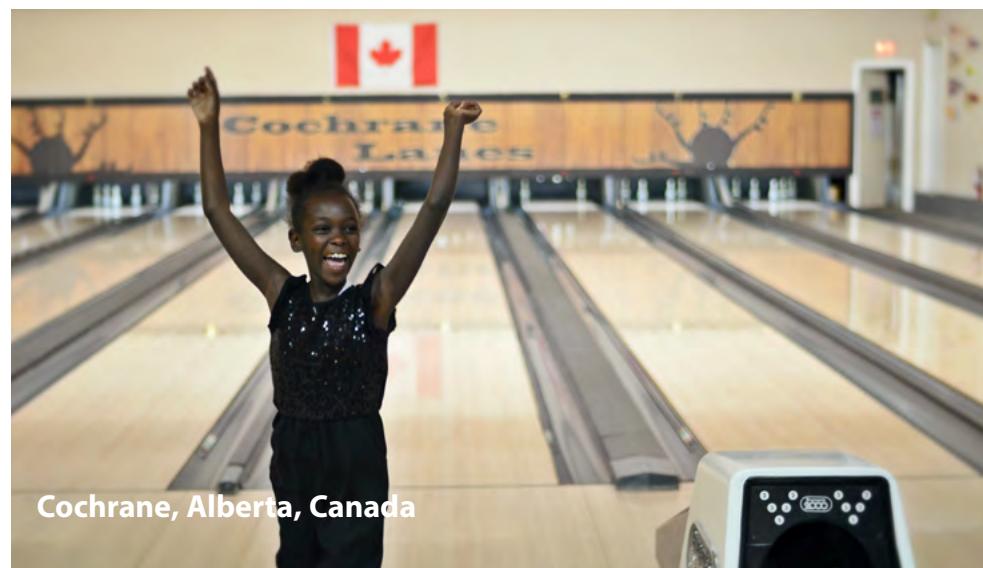
## Tonga

Here in Tonga there are only eight of us. There are me and my wife Tupou Mohefo and her mother, Sela Ha'angana, aged 85, the pioneer of the Church here in Tonga. Also there are my five children: Sonia, Alfred, Edward, Tu'ihalafatai, and the youngest, Priscilla.

Since the breakup of the Church in 2010, it has only been my family of eight keeping the Feast with the United Church of God. We have been watching DVDs sent from the home offices in Cincinnati and Australia to run our church services. Until 2015 the Ha'angana family, Samson, his wife Anne, and their children Jessica, Larisa, Nathaniel, Helen and her husband Chris Matila and their children Litia, Zechariah and Mohefo Jr., came over to keep the Feast with us. And last year Bruce Dean, his wife and my wife's sister Sesilia came over to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Church founded here in Tonga by Tolutau Ha'angana.

Every year we have been receiving inspiring and encouraging messages. Yet the only thing we miss is the fellowship with other members of God's people. Overall, I and my family enjoy keeping God's Feast Days, even though it is just our family, but we hope to see new faces next year.

*Frank 'Osika*



## Canada

### Cochrane, Alberta

This year was the first time the Feast of Tabernacles was held in Cochrane. Services were held in the Hall of Vision at the Cochrane Ranchehouse Convention Center. The Ranchehouse was superb, private and spacious for all of our activities. The hall features a wall of windows giving Feastgoers a panoramic view of the foothills and Rocky Mountains.

Cochrane itself has the benefits of a small town and is well situated between Calgary, the Rocky Mountains and Banff

National Park, which gave families the opportunity to take afternoon trips to the mountains, including Banff and Lake Louise, as well as take in all that the town of Cochrane and the city of Calgary have to offer. Feastgoers also enjoyed the many wonderful ethnic restaurants in Cochrane.

There were 160 attendees who took in spiritually filled sermons and inspiring special music. Eighty-two enjoyed a festival dinner on Canadian Thanksgiving Day followed by a dance. Seniors enjoyed three come-and-go events where

they could fellowship and play cards and games. The teens and young adults spent an afternoon five-pin bowling, a new experience for our American friends! Families went to the Calgary Zoo, went horseback riding and spent time at the aquatic center in Cochrane. Others took their children to a petting zoo and a trampline park.

On Friday evening we ushered in the Sabbath with a hymn sing that lasted for two hours.

At services the atmosphere was warm and cooperative. The Ranchehouse staff was very accommodating, making our Feast experience even better. The Ranchehouse events planner had tears in her eyes as we were all leaving the last day.

She said that she could feel a special umbrella-like presence over the convention center for the eight days, and it was the best eight days of her entire working career. She had never seen so many smiling, happy people. Prior to our arriving she said she was not sure if she believed, but by the time the Feast was over she knew that God's presence was there.

All in all, we experienced a spirit of unity while strengthening our vision and hope of a glorious future.

It was simply a great Feast of Tabernacles.

*Larry DeLong*

## Midland, Ontario

As brethren gathered in Midland, Ontario, for the Feast of Tabernacles, they capitalized on warm and sunny weather to tour the quaint downtown, which overlooks a picturesque inlet of Lake Huron's Georgian Bay.

The Quality Inn hotel offered our 127 brethren enjoyable accommodations and a lovely breakfast area in the atrium, which allowed for fellowship over breakfast each day. This same atmosphere gave an all-inclusive feel to our activities, which were generally open to all.

The family day activity was well attended with 75 brethren getting to know each other better. Later that day we had a women's seminar given by Pam Kuver that was well attended and enjoyed. Our games night in the atrium was also well attended by brethren of all ages.

Many brethren enjoyed the spectacular scenery of the Georgian Bay as the Miss Midland cruised through some of the 30,000 islands on a beautiful sunny and warm afternoon. Others enjoyed strolling down the mural-graced buildings lining Midland's main street.

For the third year in a row we had a square dance. We were directed by a professional caller, who made the evening fun. In spite of many of us trying something new our caller was able to make it easy enough that those among us with more than one left foot were able to learn.

Our seniors were treated to a heartwarming message given by Terry Johnson, who also encouraged them to relate various aspects of their lives through different questions with topics such as miracles, interesting stories, favorite verses and stumbling blocks in their lives that they had to overcome. This reminded them that their worth to the Church and to God is of great value regardless of one's age.

In addition to these activities we also had a variety night, a Bible study and a group buffet lunch on the Eighth Day.

On the evening of the Eighth Day 38 brethren gathered at a local restaurant for one final meal together before heading home.

In spite of some health issues and other trials that came along, the brethren could often be overheard remarking how enjoyable it was to be together and what a wonderful Feast it was.

*Patrick Read*

## Prince Edward Island

Beautiful Prince Edward Island is called the "Garden Island" mainly because one of its main industries is farming. That, along with the beautiful fall colors, provided a perfect setting for keeping the Feast. Since a number of those in attendance live in more isolated areas and are unable to regularly attend weekly services, the spiritual food from the messages was especially appreciated.

This was the first time we used the Rodd Brudenell Resort and found the physical plant to be lovely. Because their hotel restaurant was closed for the season, we had the use of it exclusively for our breakfasts and other group meals.

With an average daily attendance of around 75, there was a family atmosphere as people met new friends and got reacquainted with others. Activities had high attendance but left time for attendees to explore the surrounding area with a popular site being a working lighthouse where you could climb to the top and see the mechanism in action.

Since we were there over Canadian Thanksgiving, a special turkey dinner was arranged at one of the local restaurants. Another popular activity was the bus tour. This tour made several stops, including a stop at the Anne of Green Gables museum to see the setting of many of these famous stories. The tour guide mentioned that we were there during the peak of the fall colors.

There were only a handful of children, so our family day activity included everyone in a variety of games with a special passport and prizes for those with the highest scores for three different categories: child, adult and senior.

The variety show began with a bagpipe number and included instrumental and

vocal pieces. All the messages were well received, including the keynote messages from the home office.

*Anthony Wasilkoff*

## Victoria, British Columbia

The Feast at Victoria, British Columbia, was in an iconic harbor setting surrounded by local wonders of God's creation. Sculptured garden parks, seascapes and distant mountains surrounded the iconic landmarks, museums and the varied attractions of Victoria Harbour. Brethren devoured tasty spiritual treats in the form of 17 split sermons plus four Bible seminars exploring the themes of God's festivals.

Family activities included a three-hour ocean cruise viewing humpback whales, sea lions among islands in the Strait of

Juan de Fuca. The family dinner dance featured a live 17-piece big band playing tunes that moved all generations for hours, accompanied by a catered dinner. Family day was a discovery of the gardens, trails, vistas and petting zoo in beautiful Beacon Hill Park.

During the Feast, teens ventured through Miniature World, Bug Zoo and a provincial museum, while the singles and young adults were invited to challenge each other at a special game establishment. Fellowship and other local activities were within walking distance of the Feast venue, and God provided good weather to complement each day.

We have enjoyed two years of feasting in the greater Victoria area and would appreciate your prayers as we search for the location of next year's Feast somewhere in beautiful British Columbia.

*John Elliott*



## Caribbean

### Montego Bay, Jamaica

A feeling of family set the tone for this Feast as we met at the oceanfront Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa, outside of Montego Bay. This beautiful and peaceful location provided a millennial setting with its lush gardens, pools, sandy beaches, walking paths, tropical views and excellent hotel service. About 65 Jamaican brethren were joined by visitors from the U.S., Canada and South Africa to celebrate the largest Caribbean Feast site in the past 22 years, with 505 in attendance.

Besides uplifting messages focusing on the theme of Psalm 8:3-5, sermons gave us distinct glimpses of "making the Millennium more real to us," often with Powerpoint slides to visually enhance our imagination. On family day, our teens had a special Bible study outdoors with breakout group discussions on "how to rule over our members—eyes, ears, mouth and mind—to glorify God."

Special music included a variety of inspiring solos, duets/group arrangements and joyful choirs—with 32 participating in the children's choir! We are grateful to all of those who shared their God-given gifts and talents to serve in this way.

Our Feast family grew with an engagement, four baptisms, a widows tea, hymn sing, interactive Bible study (focused on John 2-3), teen hospitality and other opportunities for fellowship during "day pass" days when the Jamaican brethren enjoyed meals and organized activities on the hotel property.

Many visiting brethren appreciated seeing more of Jamaica by going on various tours: Dunn's River Falls, Luminous Lagoon, Martha Brae River Rafting, tubing, zip-lining, bobsled/Sky Explorer, snorkeling near Doctor's Cave Beach and shopping.

Plans are underway to meet again at this location next year, so if you are interested please look at <http://caribbean.ucg.org/content/jamaica-2018> for more details and specific dates when you can register.

*Jeff and Alisa Lockhart*

## Reduit Beach, St. Lucia

Over 90 enthusiastic Feastgoers rejoiced together during the Feast on beautiful Reduit Beach in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. Brethren from Canada, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and the U.S.A. joined the St. Lucia brethren for a most uplifting time of great fellowship, messages, food and rejoicing.

Everyone was especially happy to offer big hugs to our lone Dominican members, Augustus and Vera Joseph. Since Hurricane Maria devastated their island, no one has been able to contact them, so you can imagine our joy to see them arrive safely in St. Lucia for the Feast of Tabernacles.

The greatest highlights were, of course, the messages and fellowship. Other activi-

ties included a tour of the island, catamaran cruise and family day at the Pigeon Island national landmark. Everyone raved about the cultural evening, where St. Lucian music and dance were on display, as well as foods from all the Caribbean islands prepared by the Feast attendees from those islands.

The annual “wine and cheese toast on the Morne” was also held on the eve of the Eighth Day. Everyone joined in a hymn as we watched the sun set over a peaceful blue ocean. We bid farewell to the Feast of Tabernacles and welcomed the Eighth Day as we reflected on the realization of what these days picture.

As usual, there were many tearful goodbyes the next day, and we all agreed—until we meet again, and may God speed that day!

*Chuck and Mary Smith*

Swimming was available on-site, as well as a small tenpin bowling alley and a games room that was particularly popular with the younger members of our group. During the Feast they also visited Torquay Aquarium and took over an Italian restaurant!

Our activities culminated on the last evening with the “Last Night at the Proms”—a talent show and grand event at which everyone had fun; we joined in singing and did some amazing flag waving!

*Bryan and Tania Ellams*

## Kuressaare, Estonia

The Feast of Tabernacles in Estonia was held on the beautiful island of Saaremaa, in the Baltic Sea. Thirty-seven brethren gathered from six different countries to observe the Feast here. Services were held in English with simultaneous translations into the Russian and Latvian languages.

All were welcomed to a champagne and hors d'oeuvres reception following the opening night service. This special evening helped in building relationships among the brethren.

Messages focused on why we keep the Feast, our relationships with God and others today, and the hope and vision of our future role in His coming Kingdom.

In addition to enjoying the many spa-related activities on site, brethren enjoyed exploring the nearby castle, walks into town and various games with one another. Many of the brethren spent an afternoon enjoying a guided tour of historical sites on the island of Muhu, including Koguva village, which featured peasant architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The crisp fall weather and warm, familial fellowship, along with the rich cultural flavor of the region, made a memorable backdrop for worshipping God at this festival site.

*Don Turgeon*

## Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France

The all-inclusive Club Vacancier resort in Roquebrune-sur-Argens on the French Riviera once again welcomed approximately 170 brethren from around the world for the Feast in France.

We were blessed with a diverse group of European and American speakers who delivered outstanding messages. In addition to our daily services alternating between French and English, we enjoyed a special hymn-singing hour in French and English, a spectacular talent show and dance, and well done children's festival instruction.

We welcomed individuals observing the Feast for the first time and rejoiced in exceptionally beautiful weather and with an equally beautiful spirit of love and concern for one for another. Everyone pitched in, stepped up and contributed to

making the eight days very special.

Excursions to Nice, the medieval “perched” village (and amazing artistic and shopping destination) of St. Paul de Vence, the island of St. Marguerite, and to the perfume capital of Grasse to tour a perfume factory, provided great opportunities to enjoy the sites of the region as well as fellowship with brethren. We also visited the local artisanal specialty of the region, chocolate making, in the medieval village of Roquebrune, as well as hiked the 1,000 feet to the top of the Roquebrune rock.

Having the exclusive use of the property, brethren enjoyed fine French cuisine with copious choice in cheeses and wine, with the open gelato bar being a real hit. What really makes the Feast special, though, was just being able to spend time together, all in one place, sharing each other's joys and challenges over a meal, after an evening activity in the main reception area over a beer, or on the bus visiting the various local attractions. It's God's people being together and His Holy Spirit being poured out abundantly that we all treasure.

*Tim and Maryse Peabworth*

## Schluchsee, Germany

Blessed with stunning autumn scenery, the German, Dutch, Swiss and Austrian brethren enjoyed hosting our overseas guests at this year's Feast of Tabernacles in the Black Forest region of Germany. The total number in attendance this year was 188.

Once again the celebratory tone was set with an uplifting opening night service, and messages throughout the Feast provided plenty of motivation and food for thought. Attendees enjoyed a wide variety of planned activities, including a welcome evening, women's brunch, women's and men's discussions, teen studies, children's Bible lessons, a Saturday night concert evening showcasing the amazing musical talents of local brethren and a lively family dance.

The young children thoroughly enjoyed a visit to a certified organic dairy farm, where they could milk a cow (and sample the warm milk), ride horses and a donkey, take tractor rides and cook “bread-on-a-stick” over an open fire. The teens and young adults participated in cart racing—a yearly event where last year's winner was able to retain his title. Volleyball and soccer were also a highlight for the sporty, and of course there was still time for plenty of delicious feasting on Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte and other local culinary specialties.

This year's organized excursion was a fascinating visit to a clock museum and the Triburger Waterfall, with lunch and time to explore the town of Furtwangen.

As always the Feast in Schluchsee was a



Saubadia, Italy

## Europe/British Isles

### Torquay, Devon, England

The Feast of Tabernacles in the British Isles this year was held in Torquay, Devon, on the English Riviera. There were 266 people who were registered.

The Victoria Hotel was the setting for all services, and the majority of Feast attendees lived on-site, giving the Feast a particularly family-oriented feel, especially with so many extended families all attending in Torquay.

Feast messages illustrated the concluding phases of God's plan for all mankind, where His government is to be reestablished on the earth, and all in their own time will have access to His Holy Spirit and eternal life. Victor Kubik's sermon was downloaded and shown on large projector screens.

The flowers on the stage were beautiful, and the special music was plentiful. We enjoyed a varied selection of solos and choirs and individual musical pieces and especially enjoyed the children's choir.

Gratitude was the theme of the first Bible study, and everyone was particularly grateful for the bountiful breakfasts and varied three-course evening meals, which were served in the grand dining room. The hotel management and staff were extremely helpful and pleasant.

The autumn weather was warmer than usual, and during the Feast we saw lots of blue skies. Around 100 people took the opportunity to walk the 30-40 minutes from the Victoria Hotel to Cockington Country Park, and we took two coaches on a trip to Plymouth. In Plymouth we enjoyed a walking tour on which we visited Plymouth Hoe and the Mayflower Steps, where in 1620 the Mayflower set out for the New World with the pilgrims on board.

During the week there was some free time scheduled, but we also enjoyed two dances, a snooker tournament, indoor lawn bowls, a quiz night and of course the sign-up and getting-to-know-you evening. There was such a buzz in the room—it was great to hear everyone getting to know one another!

wonderful reunion for the Dutch and German speaking brethren. The unity felt was memorable and just a foretaste of what will be experienced in the Millennium.

*Claire Kasper*

## Sabaudia, Italy

Brethren from around the world gathered on the beautiful Tyrrhenian coast in Sabaudia, Italy, for God's Feast of Tabernacles. Services were held at the Oasi di KuFra hotel in a setting of peace and tranquility. All were welcomed by the Italian brethren who opened their arms warmly and made the Feast a wonderful experience and a foretaste of God's coming millennial Kingdom.

Daily services were in English and Italian with many inspirational Christian living sermons showing the way to prepare ourselves for service in the Kingdom of God while we live in these temporary physical bodies. Beautiful special music accompanied the services.

A pre-Feast tour in Tuscany was arranged for those who had time to see some extra sights with the rich history of Italy. During the Feast there were trips to the Vatican Museum, Rome, Pompeii and a nearby winery. All were well attended. To see the very areas where the apostle Paul had walked, where our own brethren were tortured and killed, was very deeply moving, realizing that this world is becoming a more hostile place especially

for those who follow Christ's way of life. This was a very sobering reminder of how living God's way is rejected by this world.

During the Feast there was an interactive Bible study held for the Italian brethren. The brethren came together for a jubilant talent/variety show and a lively family dance that furthered our fellowship and offered great joy. The Feast also included children's instruction and a festival choir.

A hallmark of the Feast in Italy was the rich fellowship everyone enjoyed during meals together and getting to know brethren from different parts of the world. Brethren gathered for informal breakfasts, three-course lunches and four-course dinners with abundant conversation. The antipasto bar was spectacular, and various pasta and main courses were included daily with lunch and dinner. A special cake was served after the last meal.

Carmelo Anastasi did a commendable job of organizing the Feast with an army of volunteers. The Feast went off seamlessly. The Italian brethren spared no opportunity to thank all of us for joining them for this beautiful Feast in 2017 and to welcome us to next year's Feast. We also thank them for their hard and continual work arranging a Feast site with so many well executed facets. God's presence was surely felt there, making Italy a must-go Feast destination.

*Warner and Rachel Schmidt  
Steve and Deborah Hanson*

### Cartegena, Colombia



## Latin America

### Cochabamba, Bolivia

For the fourth consecutive time, we celebrated the Feast in Bolivia at the Hotel Regina Resort and Convention Center in the city of Cochabamba, with an excellent infrastructure and an efficient hotel staff.

The weather was good, although windy during the afternoons, but it allowed us to carry out all the outdoor activities, including swimming in its heated pools.

We had 18 brethren attend and had wonderful unity. There were fine activities outside the hotel, including two outings, one to a dinosaur park and the other to see the different fountains in the town square. We also had a dance for all and a nice tea party.

Services were quite inspiring and focused on the coming Kingdom of God. We also had two Bible studies, and there were Bible studies for the children. The children were the ones who enjoyed the heated pools the most.

God poured out his blessings on this small group of His flock, and we are very grateful for the opportunity to meet in this beautiful place in Bolivia where He placed His name.

*Raúl Machicao*

### Olmue, Chile

For the fifth year in a row, we were able to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful valley of Olmue, which is located 60 miles north of Santiago, the capital of Chile. The Feast started with some rain on the first evening, but then we enjoyed sunny days for the rest of the week. We had 105 brethren attend, and there was one baptism. We were delighted to have brethren visit us from Argentina, Brazil, Australia, the United States and Guatemala.

As in past years, we had a number of activities for the different age groups. We had a children's party next to the pool. The youth had a barbecue and then a dance. We also had a family dance and the traditional talent night with a dinner prepared by members of the spokesman's club. We also had a nice excursion to a nearby mountaintop. Another activity was a visit to an orphanage in nearby Limache. A group of volunteers took food donations and spent time with the children.

I was also able to travel with my wife to the Feast in northern Argentina to the state of Misiones, where the brethren celebrated it in two areas. We met with a group of 47 brethren in the first site, Campo Viera. On Friday two people were baptized. That afternoon the ladies had a get-together where they discussed Bible topics and drank mate, the traditional herbal tea there. On the Sabbath, after services there was a barbecue, and the next morning we visited the second Feast site called Colonia Primavera. We had morning services and a potluck afterward. That evening we returned to Campo Viera where we enjoyed a night of music and singing. On Sunday, we returned to finish the Feast in Chile.

As always, time flew by quickly, but there was an atmosphere of unity, peace and joy that made it another memorable Feast.

*Jaime Gallardo*

### Cartagena, Colombia

After a start with low attendance on the opening night of the Feast due to an airline strike that caused multiple delays, we had a high attendance of 105 people once everyone arrived at the Hotel Regatta Cartagena. The Feast in Cartagena, Colombia, was truly an international Feast site, with brethren attending from Colombia, United States, Venezuela, the Netherlands, Scotland, Argentina, Bolivia, Australia and Canada—a total of nine countries. Of all who were attending, at

least 20 were attending the Feast for the first time, or for the first time in more than 20 years.

We were united together as a family with the welcome party on the night of the first day where we danced, played and laughed together. New activities included chocolate bingo for the women and a trip by Chiva to the Parque Espíritu del Manglar (Mangrove Spirit Park)—a park which has sculptures of many famous Cartageneans. Karaoke, talent night and the beach party returned and were enjoyed by everyone.

The blessing of a baby girl and the baptism of two new members into the family of God brought joy to everyone! Other spiritual highlights in addition to daily services were individual Bible studies catered for the children, young adults, and then one for everyone. Scott Hoefker also gave a Focused Education seminar on the subject of "A Sound Mind: Principles From the Word of God."

Though attending from many nations, we all united in God's Spirit to experience a time when peace will abound on the earth! God blessed us with peace and harmony as we learned to be patient waiting in line in the restaurant or for the elevators. Conversation abounded and spirits were joyful as we learned to live in unity. All too soon, the Feast ended and we said goodbye. Many brethren would not see each other until the next Feast, but the messages we heard would carry us through until we meet again.

*Gayle and Scott Hoefker*

### Panajachel, Guatemala

The Feast of Tabernacles was again carried out in Panajachel, Guatemala, with the purpose of honoring God the Father and Jesus Christ. We had an atmosphere of peace, harmony and cooperation with all of those who attended in Guatemala. We also had good weather.

On Thursday, Oct. 5, there were five baptisms. A minister from Denver, Colorado, Hansel New and his lovely family, visited this year. There were also brethren visiting us from Canada, United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala. We had 223 people attend the Feast here.

There were in total 11 services, 11 activities and 24 special music performances with different choirs of children, youths and adults. It was a very edifying Feast with messages explaining the future establishment of the Kingdom of God to provide mankind with the true values of love, justice and mercy. We are sure God was honored through every one of the activities, because we could experience His blessings in the harmony and unity felt among the brethren.

*Israel Robledo*

## Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

For the seventh year in a row, the Hotel Friendly Vallarta, an all-inclusive beach and Spa resort in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, welcomed us with open arms to hold the Feast there.

There were 680 in attendance from 11 different countries, allowing us to have the exclusive use of the hotel, its staff, meals and activities, making it relaxing and enjoyable. Five restaurants with different menus were free of charge and available onsite—including Italian, Mexican, American and sushi meals.

Although the weather outlook was for rain during the week of the Feast, we had excellent weather and carried out all the many outdoor activities. We thank God for providing the right weather during

the Feast!

The brethren commented on the fine spiritual messages. Some were directed to our youths, and all were filled with encouragement. We had a taste of what the Millennium will be like to maintain the hope that one day we will be part of it and what the fundamentals of the Kingdom of God are all about.

Physically, we enjoyed the place and its abundant meals—basically an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord. Activities included a Pirate Cruise along the bay, a Dolphin Encounter, an interactive zoo, Mexican shows, a Star Wars show and several dances. We also had the opportunity to release more than a thousand baby turtles on the beach, hoping that many of them will survive to return to this Banderas Bay and breed. Lastly, there were three baptisms.

*Mario Seiglie*



Lake Junaluska,  
North Carolina

## United States

### Bend-Redmond, Oregon

The Deschutes County Fairgrounds was once again the meeting place for over 650 people keeping the Feast. Rain in the previous weeks cleared the air of smoke, and the sun came out just in time to give Feastgoers incredible views of the Cascade Mountains and beautiful Central Oregon scenery.

The messages highlighted the Feast experience as they brought focus to why we keep the Feast and gave us spiritual food to take home. The inspired vision of the Kingdom of God helped fuel both the happy smiles and the fellowship we experienced together.

Besides the many waterfalls, mountains, lakes, rivers and trails to explore, activities brought God's people together as one family. Teens got to participate in an amazing-race-themed event where they split into teams and traveled around a resort looking for clues to solve Bible puzzles while trying to work as a unit.

Afterward they enjoyed a meal and dance. Young adults also got together for a pizza social where they got to know one another and make plans to spend time together.

Family day was a big hit with four separate events planned to allow everyone to get involved. The activities were planned so you could attend each one if you like, or you could pick and choose. The activities started off at Sun Mountain Fun Center, with everything from bumper cars and go-karts to bowling, arcade games and miniature golf. Later in the day we had bingo and a jam session at the meeting hall, followed by the family fun show. In all, more than 385 people participated.

This year the director of the local Neighbor Impact food bank came and thanked the brethren for their generosity in donating food and money to the area. She began by saying how overwhelmed they were that so many from around the region would choose this area to donate to, and then went on to describe the difference this has made to the community. Last year, Feastgoers donated over \$6,000

and 800 pounds of food. This year, members contributed almost \$9,000 and 800 pounds of food. This was an excellent way to let our light shine while at the Feast.

*Jeff Richards*

### Branson, Missouri

Unseasonably warm weather did not deter over 600 brethren from having the "best Feast yet" in Branson, Missouri.

We were blessed to have UCG chairman of the Council of Elders, Don Ward and his wife Wanda, for the entire Feast. Dr. Ward gave two sermons building on his consistent trunk of the tree messages and a thought-provoking Bible study on the topic of Zion.

Other sermonettes and sermons encouraged us to focus on godly character through personal examples of the speakers. Steve Shafer stressed the necessity for the Bride to be ready for Christ's return.

We had a higher than usual number of preteens and teens, which was exciting to see at a more seasoned festival site.

Terry and Tracy Cunningham enthusiastically planned several activities for our teens including a new venue to the Branson area, an indoor adventure setting featuring all kinds of courses to test physical abilities. The staff at this site expressed their admiration of the courteous and respectful attitudes displayed by our teens.

The annual BBQ organized by Paul and Kathleen Urbom was well attended, and this year Dale and Karen Frazier added a new attraction, a music circle, where musicians led those interested in a sing-along type setting.

Randy Schmidt graciously returned to Branson to lead our choir and musicians in special music to honor our great God.

All age groups are considered in Feast planning and events for these various venues, and all were enjoyed by our entire fellowship.

Mitch and Linda Knapp were also able to be in Branson for the entire Feast, and we appreciate their loving example of servant leadership. Mitch gave the last sermon on the Eighth Day and admonished us to not let down and to face the coming months drawing consistently closer to our loving Father and Elder Brother as we see the day approaching.

Devin Schulz served as assistant Feast coordinator this year. Along with his wife Tiffany they contributed their loving and energetic service to all of us. We appreciate their exemplary festival service, a wonderful example of a younger couple who God is calling into His ministry.

*Joe and Pat Dobson*

### Cincinnati, Ohio

God blessed the Cincinnati Feast site with uplifting spiritual messages! Attendance averaged 285, with a high attendance

of 374 on the morning of the Eighth Day. The Friday night Bible study given by Darris McNeely featured the very timely subject of prophecy: "Why Europe Matters."

Approximately one-half of the attendees were senior citizens, and they were treated to a delicious luncheon on the Monday of the Feast. Several teen and preteen activities were held, including two preteen Bible lessons, one teen Bible study and two more teen Bible discussions. Recreational activities included a trip to Scene 75 and an afternoon at the Newport Aquarium as well.

On family day, we were treated to a wonderful performance by the children's choir. Our young ones poured their hearts out in praise to God! After services we had the "stuffed animal giveaway." Brethren donated millennial type stuffed toys, and each child collected both a large and a small animal. Expectant mothers were also asked to take a toy to give to their soon-to-be little Feastgoer! Family day concluded with a country music session.

Tuesday evening featured a movie night—a classic film, Royal Wedding, was shown. Moviegoers were treated to free popcorn.

The generosity of Christ's brethren was demonstrated in many ways. One area dealt with the Feast food drive. Many items of food (plus cash) were donated and went to the Christian Help Center, a non-profit organization which serves hundreds of families in need in the area.

Just as the Eighth Day began, we had a hymn sing. It was wonderful to hear God's people rejoicing on this day by praising the Father and Jesus Christ in song on this wonderful Holy Day.

*Vince Szymkowiak*

### Glacier Country, Montana

Excitement was high as 311 Feastgoers converged on the new Montana Feast site at Glacier Bible Camp. Located just 11 miles from the west entrance to Glacier National Park, the fall beauty of God's creation of majestic mountains, rivers and diverse wildlife provided an inspiring backdrop for worshipping our Creator in peace and harmony.

The auditorium at the new venue, appropriately called the Tabernacle, built with huge beams and natural woods, created an ambiance that promoted both our worship services and long periods of fellowship before and after services. Extended fellowship and visiting was augmented by the delicious onsite meals served by the camp staff in the camp dining hall.

The affordable meals, coupled with many onsite housing options ranging from tent sites to full RV hook-ups to cabins to motel style rooms, makes the

**Please see page 17**

# Africa & Canada



Copperbelt of Zambia



Ukunda, Kenya



Blantyre, Malawi



Accra, Ghana



Got Kachola, Kenya



Ogembo, Kenya



Kalukanya, Zambia



Kpalimé, Togo



Cochrane, Alberta



Lusaka, Zambia



Igbara-Oke, Nigeria



Victoria, British Columbia



Zimbabwe



Benin



Midland, Ontario



Cameroon



Margate, South Africa



Lilongwe, Malawi



Prince Edward Island

# Asia/Pacific



Penang, Malaysia



Rockingham, Australia



Sri Lanka



Tonga



Hong Kong, China



Agra, India



Myanmar



Merimbula, Australia



Nelson, New Zealand



Sunshine Coast, Australia



St. Helens, Tasmania



Visayas, Philippines



Davao, Philippines



Baguio City, Philippines

# Europe/British Isles & Latin America



Greece



Saubaudia, Italy



Kuresaare, Saaremaa, Estonia



Cartegena, Colombia



Torquay, England



Puerto Vallarta, Mexico



Cochobamba, Bolivia



Schluchsee, Germany



Panajachel, Guatemala



Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France



Olmue, Chile

# United States & Caribbean



Lake Junaluska,  
North Carolina



Jekyll Island, Georgia



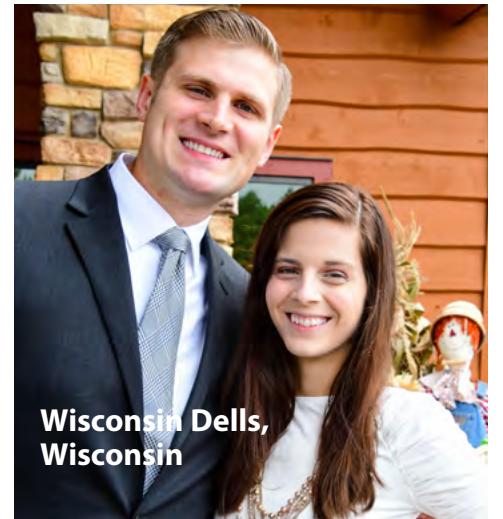
Oceanside, California



Glacier Country, Montana



Montego Bay, Jamaica



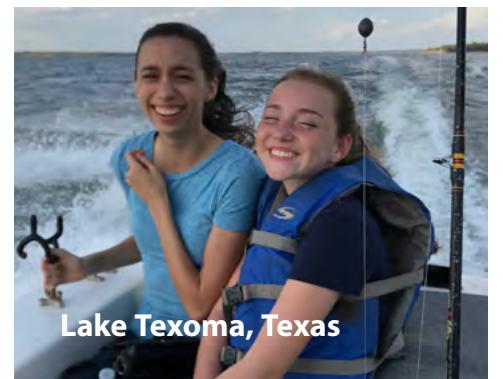
Wisconsin Dells,  
Wisconsin



Reduit Beach,  
St. Lucia



Steamboat Springs,  
Colorado



Lake Texoma, Texas



Panama City Beach,  
Florida



Phoenix, Arizona



Bend-Redmond, Oregon



Branson,  
Missouri



White Haven, Pennsylvania



Cincinnati, Ohio

# Feast Reports

Continued from page 12

Montana Feast site affordable for nearly any budget. Many families “tabernacled” in large nearby vacation homes—often having a Feast reunion with family and extended family from all parts of the country gathered in one home.

The spiritual food was provided by a variety of pastors, elders and deacons from around the country, accentuated by a beautiful diversity of special music each day before the main message. The live Internet transmission of Sabbath services from Lake Junaluska was well received without any technical difficulties and displayed on the twin large screens. Two Bible studies for adults, as well as teen and young adult studies, and children youth instruction rounded out the spiritual diet.

The bowling party, senior luncheon, glacier day, ladies tea, family dance and fun filled family day were all well attended and enjoyed by all who participated. Especially inspiring was how God provided beautiful, sunny weather for the family day when it was forecast to be cold and snowy! Converging around the campfire in the campground in the evenings was also another form of fellowship enjoyed by many.

The attitude of service prevailed from start to finish of the Feast! Many volunteers from different parts of the country worked together to collectively make the Feast a time of edification and encouragement. The nourishing and helping of one another provided a real foretaste of what we envision all mankind will enjoy when Christ returns and sets up God’s Kingdom on earth!

*Dan Deininger*

## Jekyll Island, Georgia

This year marked another anniversary of the Jekyll Island site, where the Feast of Tabernacles has been observed since 1963. Many of the attendees this year had stories from the days when the Jekyll Feast had one of the largest tents most had ever seen. Those days are only memories, but the Jekyll convention center was a marvelous venue for this year’s Feast. Jekyll Island has changed in many ways, but the old charm is still evident for all to see once one enters the island gates.

Just over 530 kept the Feast in Jekyll this year, and we were once again welcomed by excellent weather. The only small complaint was that it was actually unseasonably hot, but the attendees were glad to take the heat over the predicted inclement weather.

The messages at this year’s Feast once again pointed us to the coming Kingdom of God to earth and the focus of God’s

plan for mankind. The high attendance was 534, and the joy of fellowshiping together made this another wonderful Feast. Those attending were excited that the Kubiks were able to attend the last four days in Jekyll.

Other than excellent sermonettes and sermons, we had the following activities: a teen miniature golf outing, a singles dinner, a golf scramble, and a family day with a barbecue lunch. We also had a service project for the Glynn Community Crisis Center, in which numerous items were donated for the center. In fact, five van loads of supplies were provided, and the director was near tears of joy for the fine donation from our members.

As always one of the highlights was the senior luncheon in which we honored those seniors who, in many cases, have served in the congregations for decades.

We were truly blessed again this year with protection, inspiration and amazing opportunities for fellowship. We hope many more will be able to enjoy the Feast experience of Jekyll Island in coming years.

*Stan Martin*

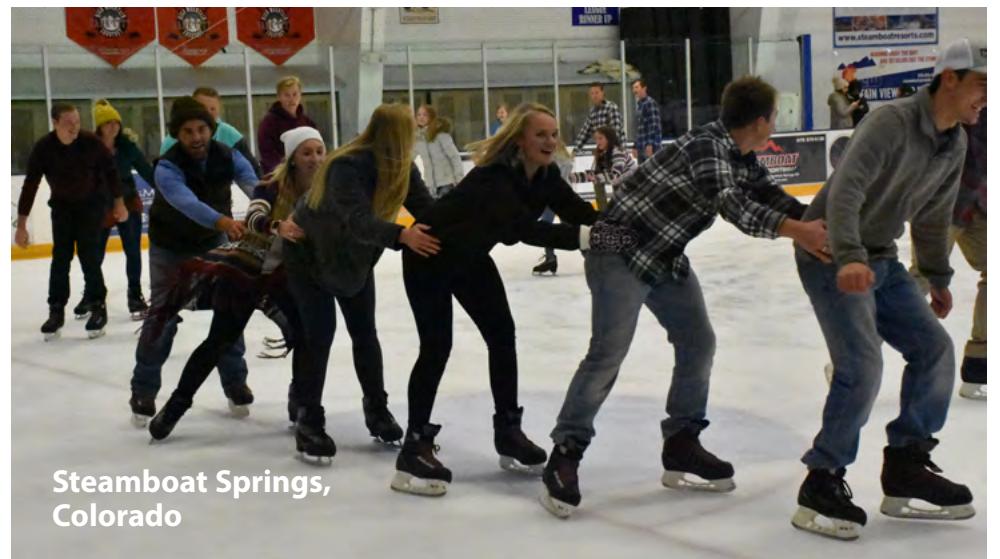
## Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Nearly 600 brethren greatly appreciated God’s Feast of Tabernacles at beautiful and peaceful Lake Junaluska, in North Carolina. Members attending in person were joined daily by those who participated via the webcast. These included fellow brethren at the satellite sites of Big Sandy, Texas, Tampa, Florida, and in Ottawa and Ontario, Canada, as well as others at home and in small groups who were unable to travel to the Feast.

The spiritual nutrition offered each day in educational and inspirational messages provided everyone with great encouragement, motivation and a clear vision of an exciting and positive future. The foremost theme during our delightful time together was the soon-coming Kingdom of God, visualizing 1,000 years of peace and true justice on earth under Jesus Christ’s righteous and perfect rule.

A joyful, enthusiastic spirit of love and service was fully evident throughout the Feast. Our fine and highly capable management team members and many volunteers served in youth instruction, mothers/parents room, parking and traffic, special music, ushering, special services, door greeting, technical operations and numerous other areas.

A large number of enjoyable festival events were held. These included children’s Bible instruction, children’s choir, teen/young adult choir, children’s Feast party, family dance, family movie night, senior citizen luncheon, singles meet-and-greet, teen meet-and-greet, teen athletic activity, young adult Bible study, young adult meet-and-greet and an elders



meet-and-greet.

Brethren contributed generously to our “Family Helping Family” fund, which made it possible to help brethren attend our various events and to support events that many members had the opportunity to attend. Additionally, a huge number of greeting cards, signed by the attendees, were sent to members who were unable to attend the Feast this year.

We all had an outstanding time and now look forward to that amazing period when all people will experience genuine peace, harmony and joyfulness—pictured marvelously by God’s wonderful Feast of Tabernacles!

*John LaBissoniere*

## Lake Texoma, Texas

Approximately 500 people observed the Feast and Eighth Day at the Tanglewood Resort at Lake Texoma in North Texas for the very first time in 2017. It seemed that the vast majority of attendees had a wonderful Feast and really enjoyed the gorgeous weather and setting at Lake Texoma!

The messages for all eight days were inspiring, uplifting and educational. The opening night message was about worshipping our King, Jesus Christ, rejoicing in the Feast and giving glory to God our Father as we journey toward His Kingdom. The final messages of hope and salvation given on the Eighth Day drew the Feast to an awesome conclusion. Other messages focused on creating a paradise on earth, becoming teachers, setting spiritual goals, etc. as we look to the fulfillment of these days in God’s Kingdom.

Since the majority of attendees stayed at the Tanglewood Resort where services were held, there were many, many convenient opportunities for fellowship. Many people volunteered to serve and, as a result, the planned activities of dinner cruises on Lake Texoma, a Texas-style barbecue dinner and western dance, a tropical themed family day with chicken teriyaki barbecue, horseshoes, volleyball, basketball, board games, two bouncy castles/slides for the kids, and a sing-along around the campfire all went well and were well attended and greatly appreci-

ated. One of the highlights of our family day was a baptism in Lake Texoma. We also had a striped bass tournament and a 27 ½-inch striped bass took the grand prize: a new rod and reel!

Lake Texoma was the officially designated UCG Feast site for the deaf in 2017, and a large contingent of deaf members and interpreters with their families greatly enjoyed each other’s company throughout the Feast.

One other highlight of the Feast was an early morning group of men’s meetings for five days throughout the Feast. The meetings were called “Men’s Challenge,” and there was ample opportunity for 25 men to consider and discuss how to face our challenges to become better husbands, fathers, role models and leaders as well as to form bonds that will last a lifetime.

Overall, the Feast at Lake Texoma was a beautiful setting to enjoy a spiritual Feast and draw closer to God the Father and Jesus Christ!

*Mark Welch*

## Oceanside, California

There were 485 brethren who rejoiced before God for one week plus a day at the Q.L.N. Center in Oceanside, California. The one-story facility’s cheery interior created an intimate and wonderful festival home. Approximately 35 percent of the audience attended here for the first time. It certainly made for a vibrant gathering. The 40-member choir and instrumental ensemble certainly added to our sense of worship before God. After the final Eighth Day message, Ingrid Helge sang “The New Jerusalem” by Michael Card with the congregation rising and joining in on the chorus as PowerPoint pictures of the heavenly Jerusalem and the starry universe were displayed in the background.

Those attending Oceanside were able to partake of our standard church services plus a special night activity of welcoming in the Sabbath with a hymn-sing accompanied by a Bible study presented by Rob-

in Webber titled “Two Promises to Live and Die For,” from Revelation 22:4. There was also an interactive Sabbath teen class, a couple of festival classes for younger children and a very interactive young adults study guided by Steve Buchanan titled “Rejoice in Your Youth” that dealt with this godly command from Ecclesiastes 11:9. We enjoyed a full afternoon of a two-part workshop presentation by Jon Garnant titled “Through the Eyes of Christ,” discussing how Jesus would have approached the Feast of Tabernacles both as a contemporary Jew as well as being the Son of God who as the Word led Israel through the wilderness.

The seniors banquet, which is always a festival highlight, was attended by 105 “seasoned citizens” and ministerial couples who were greeted by an aquatic theme this year and were graciously served by our young adults and teenagers.

Beyond services and Bible studies, Oceanside attendees were able to enjoy the nearby sites of the La Jolla and Del Mar coastlines, Oceanside Harbor, the San Diego Zoo and Balboa Park, Seaworld on Mission Bay, Old Town San Diego and nearby Legoland. Many simply settled for downtime with family and brethren resting on the warm sandy beaches of Oceanside and nearby Carlsbad. The weather was generally 75 to 80 degrees, which was picture-perfect for the activities at hand.

Most importantly, the entire membership of all ages came prepared to fully be involved in a spiritual Feast. They came prepared to give of themselves, volunteer on a moment’s notice, and share their smiles, warmth and helping hand to all they encountered. Attendance at all activities was up! We plan to utilize the Q.L.N. Center in Oceanside again next year.

*Robin Webber*

## Panama City Beach, Florida

Balmy tropical weather, beautiful sunsets, sugar-sand beaches and emerald green waters make Panama City Beach a family Feast site that forecasts a future global Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 36:35).

Nearly 1,000 faithful brethren enjoyed Panama City Beach’s Emerald Coast this 2017 Feast of Tabernacles.

Registration was around 880; our highest attendance was 968. Daily services were well attended and highlighted by the adult and children’s choirs and vocal solos.

The messages were thoughtful, uplifting and educational. Three separate Bible studies were presented on Friday evening. Victor Kubik’s Sabbath sermon from Lake Junaluska was well received and clearly transmitted.

The indoor family activity at Rockit!

Lanes on Sunday drew nearly 350 brethren, who participated in skating, bowling, shooting pool and various electronic games. Jelly was also present to entertain the smaller children.

On Sunday evening, the teens enjoyed a dance and refreshments. Additionally, two separate teen and young adults hospitalities were provided during the Feast.

Family day was on Monday and included messages about the family and an evening family dance with tasty refreshments.

Midway through the Feast, 161 seniors gathered for a sumptuous buffet meal at Capt. Jack’s.

Feast days and nights were pleasantly warm, although we did experience strong winds and rain for a few hours on Sunday after midnight. God spared us from the storm, and most of the brethren showed up for services the next morning.

If you desire a great family Feast site, Panama City Beach is a good choice.

*Jerold Aust*

## Phoenix, Arizona

There were 214 peaceful people who had a wonderful, joyous Feast of Tabernacles here in beautiful, sunny Phoenix, even though our temperatures were a little bit toasty for some (highs in the mid-90s).

On the first high day we hosted a hospitality suite before services that helped us jumpstart our fellowship. The live webcast came through flawlessly on Sabbath, and we really appreciated the messages from Frank Dunkle and Victor Kubik.

We had another outstanding fellowship opportunity at the seniors luncheon, which included participation by the older children in a question-and-answer Bible trivia session. Most tables also had a youngster sharing the meal with the seniors and asking questions after they entertained the seniors with a selection of songs.

On Monday we had family day at Amazing Jakes, which has a large arcade and rides for the children. They also had a great buffet lunch. The social highlight of the Feast for many was the 2 ½-hour sunset dinner cruise on Steamboat Dolly on beautiful Canyon Lake. The temperature was pleasant with a gentle breeze blowing. We spotted a small herd of bighorn sheep on the side of a cliff. It was an ideal evening.

On the Eighth Day we hosted a lunch so all could remain on site for further fellowship. During the Feast we heard many inspiring messages from a wide variety of speakers, including a gentleman from the Netherlands. Overall, we had a very enjoyable, uplifting Feast of Tabernacles here in Phoenix, Arizona.

*Larry Beckett*

## Tucson, Arizona

For 11 years now we have had an unofficial Feast site in Tucson, Arizona, for the local brethren who, for one reason or another, are unable to travel to any Feast site. This year our total attendance was lower than previous years at an average of 17, including three members from our small congregation in Sierra Vista, Arizona. The number of brethren who were able to attend this year was 21, although not all were able to attend everyday.

It was a joyous time had by all with inspiring sermons via webcast. Every day after services ended we had coffee and snacks for any who desired to fellowship. On the Eighth Day we had a catered Mexican luncheon.

This Tucson festival site received the live stream from Bend, Oregon, and we would like to extend our gratitude to them for the opportunity to enjoy the Feast of Tabernacles along with them. We also would like to extend our gratitude to our hosts for all these years, Jesse and

Diana Reyes, for without them the local brethren would not be able to experience the joys of attending God’s Feast.

*Martie Reyes Carreon*

## Steamboat Springs, Colorado

With its stunning Rocky Mountain scenery, its diversity of provincial but stylish cafes and restaurants, its delightful alpine shops, and the abundance of indoor and outdoor activities, Steamboat Springs just seemed to be the perfect place to keep God’s Feast of Tabernacles.

Great mountain weather provided nearly 400 Feast-keepers here many opportunities to enjoy the outdoor and indoor recreational activities in the area, including hiking, fishing, ATV rentals, gondola rides, horseback riding, natural hot water springs, ice skating, bowling and museums. Many took a ride on “The Outlaw,” the longest track mountain coaster in North America (6,280 ft.). This



Roquebrune-sur-Argens, France



Jekyll Island, Georgia



St. Helens, Tasmania



Igbara-Oke, Nigeria



Visayas, Philippines

See more 2017 photos here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157665995179429>

year a new indoor tennis activity was added for the teens, and they enjoyed playing volleyball and dodgeball there as well.

The Steamboat Grand Resort has accommodated the United Church of God for all 16 of our Feasts here, and its exceptional staff was again very attentive. Many members commented that it is an ideal place to keep the Feast and how convenient it is to stay in the same facility where services are held.

Above all, it was evident from the opening night that this was not our Feast, but God's. His presence was heard in the depth and insight of every message, seen in the joyful faces of His children and felt in the loving fellowship we all shared with Him together. Every service was filled with beautiful music offered to God in sacrifices of praise in a millennial setting of peace and joy, but many commented on how the sermonettes, sermons and Bible studies stood out as so expressive, inspiring and edifying.

All returned home well-fed, both physically and spiritually.

*Brian Shaw*

## Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Those attending the Feast in Wisconsin Dells enjoyed spiritually inspiring and instructive messages, as well as warm fellowship in the beautiful fall setting.

Among the 638 people attending this year we had 22 of the 50 states and one Canadian province represented.

One of the characteristic and best-loved features of the Feast site here is the special music. The orchestra and choir, about 60 strong, presented a wide selection of music that greatly enhanced the worship of our great Father and Elder Brother Jesus Christ.

Activities in the Dells' scenic beauty enhanced the worship of our Creator and served as a setting to enjoy such outdoor activities as golf, hiking, touring the local waterways in the famous "ducks" and many other refreshing activities set in nature. There was also a family fun night and dance attended by approximately 400 that included music to dance by, kids games, face painting, a balloon artist, a music and comedy hour and much more!



In addition to our 10 church services we had six Bible studies covering such topics as "Tracking the Tribes of Israel," a "Timeline of Church History," a young adults dinner and Bible study titled "Let No One Despise Your Youth," a teen-oriented Bible study titled "Building Your Relationship With God at the Feast," and two other general Bible studies: "Shedding Light on the Book of Hebrews" and "A Walk Through the Millennium," centering on Isaiah's prophecies of the wonderful world tomorrow!

While this year's Feast may be over we invite you to come and join us next year! The site has a long and rich history as a venue for God's people gathering for the Feast of Tabernacles. For more than 150 years, Wisconsin Dells has been known as a great destination with tons of fun family attractions that bring over three million visitors to the Dells each year. The Dells is home to themed lodging with many featuring huge indoor water parks, many popular restaurants and tons of shopping.

*Randy D'Alessandro*

## Anchorage Feast Site 2018

by Charles Melear

The United Church of God returns to Anchorage, Alaska, for the fifth time for the 2018 Feast of Tabernacles.

For the fifth time Anchorage is being sponsored as a "specialty site." Although nobody is expected to be turned down there are special instructions for applying to this Feast site.

The 200 to 300 expected attendees will again be hosted by the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel and Spa for both housing and meeting space.

### Hotel

The 16-story hotel features 375 comfortable guest rooms with museum quality sculpture and artwork. It has earned an international reputation for dining excellence and friendly service.

### Local Area and Activities

Anchorage offers the convenience, excitement and ambience of a small but cosmopolitan city nestled into the upper reaches of historic Cook Inlet. Recreational and cultural activities coexist within walking distance of each. Wildlife viewing, fishing, hiking, biking and cross-country ski trails are minutes from downtown. Anchorage is a jumping-off place for a myriad of wilderness and outdoor adventures, including some of the world's most famous fishing and wildlife areas: Kenai National Moose Range, Kenai River, Prince William Sound, Denali National Park, Katmai National Park, Alaska Botanical Garden, Ben Boeke and

Dempsey Anderson Ice Arenas, Lake Hood Air Harbor, Hilltop, Alyeska and Alpenglow Ski Areas, Alaska Zoo and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

At this time, Church-sponsored activities have not been finalized, but group activities will be arranged. An RV company will be offering discounts to Church members for pre- and post-Feast travel.

### Costs

Rate: \$118 standard rooms and \$168 junior suites. Under 18 free and third and fourth adults is \$10 each. Local occupancy tax is 12 percent. Anchorage has no sales tax. Parking is complimentary.

### Registration

Due to the Church being directly responsible and liable to the Sheraton Anchorage for the hotel rooms reserved and for providing the complimentary meeting space, all attendees must stay at the Sheraton. Exceptions to this will be members living in Anchorage or through prior approval. Registration will begin in the spring of 2018.

### Hotel Reservations

Hotel reservations can begin on Dec. 1, 2017. A two-night, non-refundable deposit is required for this specialty Feast site per room and will be assessed by the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel when you make a reservation.

Further instructions for making hotel reservations will be coming soon. **UN**



Photo by Linda Merrick

For additional information about the Alaska Feast write to [USFestival@ucg.org](mailto:USFestival@ucg.org) or call (970) 484-5878. Above photo was taken during the 2010 Feast in Alaska.

## Portsmouth, Ohio, Recent Activities

The Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation has been busy participating in many activities over the last several months. We concluded our Year of Giving project with donations to various shelters and agencies. Our young people took turns coordinating these projects, which were very well received.

After wrapping the project up, Daniel and Dawn Evans coordinated our second international night around the globe with foods from about a dozen different places. We enjoyed foods from Egypt all the way to southern Kentucky. All left full and happy, looking forward to next year's trip around the world.

Recently about 50 brethren were able to get together at Butler Springs Camp on Aug. 20 for our annual church picnic. Bill and Darlene Helderbrand coordinated this, and we were able to enjoy food, fellowship, swimming and ice cream all afternoon.

Yum! Spaghetti by the bowls full! About 70 brethren gathered for a yearly tradition of spaghetti, bread and desserts at Reggie and Sandy Warren's home on Sept. 9. The weather cooperated and we were able to spend all afternoon together after Sabbath services. Lots of fun had by all.

*Kevin Call*



**PETER EDDINGTON**  
Media and Communications Services Operation Manager

Have you heard of the term *moral injury*? *Moral injury* is a fairly recent phrase used to describe a crisis of conscience. Psychologists are coming to realize that soldiers have faced this for centuries. It is the internal suffering resulting from doing something against your moral code—against your conscience—a wound to the conscience.

In a combat situation the damage done to a person's conscience may result from following or issuing certain orders or from witnessing something that is deeply offensive to the soldier's moral sense.

Moral injury occurs when he or she has transgressed their most deeply held personal beliefs and moral values. But it's not just something that affects soldiers. The average citizen can commit moral injury too.

### The Morphine Overdose

Let me tell you about Sergeant First Class Marshall Powell, retired. He served in Iraq for the U.S. Army. He tells the story of being diagnosed with moral injury. Here are some excerpts from an article

## Fixing Moral Injury



*Soldiers often suffer from moral injury from what they see in combat. The average citizen can suffer from it too. Do you suffer from moral injury? What is the answer to overcome this?*

written by him in *Guideposts*:

“Just after midnight on August 12, 2007, we heard a bomb go off . . .

“Trucks pulled up, loaded with casualties—Iraqi civilians, badly burned, blood everywhere. Some already dead. We had only 10 beds. There were at least three times that many casualties. It was on me to decide who would be treated . . .

“We tended to the most urgent cases. Nearly an hour passed before I saw her. A tiny Iraqi girl lying on a blanket in the hallway. She couldn't have been more than six

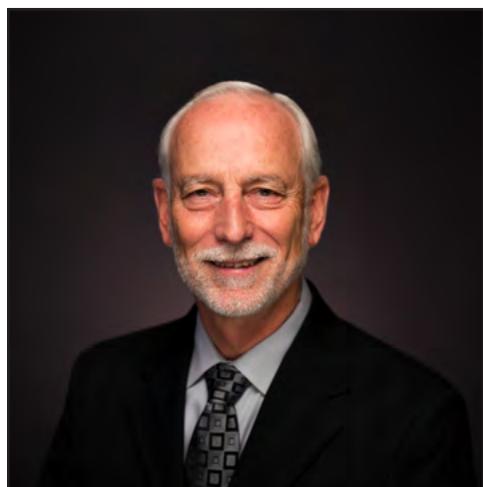
years old. Burned, covered in blood. She was dying, and I could do nothing. She let out deep moans. Even in agony, she had a sweetness to her face that reminded me of my niece . . .

“I have to ease her suffering, I told myself. This girl's really hurting. I got a syringe filled with morphine, several doses. I set up an IV and pressed dose after dose into it, enough to . . .

“She smiled at me. I smiled back and

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## From The COUNCIL



by **Mark Mickelson**

God compares the process of our conversion and overcoming to that of a metal being purified and refined in a fire. That process becomes evident in our lives when we face various trials and tests and then come to see that God is working with us to learn to trust Him and to take comfort in His goodness and love. Psalm 66 states, “Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men” (verse 5) and then, “For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined” (verse 10). The psalmist then

## The Refiner's Fire



*We are being refined, shaped and molded by God's guidance in our life. Are you allowing God to shape your life?*

states further, “We went through fire and through water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment” (verse 12).

Being refined by fire is a very real process. When I was a child our family lived in Montana near copper mining and smelting operations, and as an adult I worked at copper smelters in both New Mexico and Tennessee. Copper ore is a mineral, and large deposits can have less than even 1 percent purity and still be commercially viable. That means that over 99 percent of what is mined must eventually be removed and cast aside. Still, the value of the puri-

fied metal is such that it is worth expending the tremendous amounts of labor and energy required to obtain it.

Refining copper to purity is an extensive process, and even the metal that comes out of the massive blast furnaces and is poured into ingots is still not yet ready to use. While only about 2 percent of the impurities remain, it must be refined further. In order to be drawn into wire, copper needs to be 99.999 percent pure. In one finishing process, the copper is transferred

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## Are You Suffering From Post-Feast Depression? A Light-hearted Approach to Explaining a Common Phenomenon



Photo by Nik Shuliahin/Unsplash

Getting back to reality after the Feast can be a shock and you may experience a mild form of depression. How will work through this?

by Judy Markley & Ester Meier

Back to reality can be a shock after the Feast. We are still shielded by the protective millennial spirit with fresh memories of laughter and conversation, music, adventures, wonderful messages and new friends. Some people seem to resume their normal lifestyle, and memories naturally fade. But for others, post-Feast depression can (PFD) can set in to the point of impairment.

Symptoms are similar to a mild episode of grief or depression, feeling blue or let down. Some Feast experiences may include illness, a tragic event, even being lonely in a crowd or unfulfilled expectations. “Why did God allow this to happen to me?” With unfulfilled expectations, we might return home with disappointment that this wasn’t the best Feast ever.

### What type of PFD are you suffering from, and how can you combat PFD?

Let’s take a closer look at four different types of PFD.

First we have Frank, who suffers from symptoms of “Fear of Missing Out” (aka FoMO). He experienced missed opportunities during the Feast, especially with socializing. He is triggered by the seemingly perfect pictures of brethren shared on social media, heroic stories about great adventures abroad, people meeting the love of their life at the Feast, feeling

left out at social activities and not having made any new acquaintances. Frank feels frustrated and regretful, and his PFD symptoms, along with FoMO, increase.

Second, we have Lucy, who suffers from “Long-Time Attender” condition (aka LTA). Lucy feels that going to the Feast is more of a tradition, and the Feast doesn’t feel spiritually challenging to her anymore. People who suffer from this form of PFD usually attended the Feast for numerous years and compare their current Feast experience with seemingly “much better Feasts in the past.” Somehow they lost their focus on finding deeper meanings to known topics, and the current experience is downgraded. Depression symptoms are developed.

Third, we have Ingrid, who suffers from symptoms related to being an “Isolated Believer” (aka IB). She comes from a smaller church area and soaks up any opportunity to socialize during the Feast, and she doesn’t want this time to end. Ingrid struggles to maintain the same level of socializing after the Feast, but due to geographical distances between brethren, irregularly scheduled church services in the area or lack of peers, she becomes lonely.

Otto experiences the fourth type of depression: “Enthusiastic Optimist” syndrome. Otto makes the Feast the highlight

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Type 1 Fear of Missing Out Frank	Type 2 Long-Time Attender Lucy
<p><b>“I left the Feast, and I feel I missed out on all the socializing.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Avoid dwelling on your sadness; accentuate the benefits gained from the overall Feast experience: fun times, learning about new cultures, the new resolve you took from the experience.</li> <li>· Think of others and pray for brethren returning to challenging circumstances, such as unemployment or loss of a loved one.</li> <li>· Be grateful for what you have, as gratitude is a great antidote for depression often prescribed by therapists. List the things with which God has blessed you during this Feast.</li> <li>· Increase your personal relationship with God. Keep the inertia of the Feast going with more frequent prayer, focusing on gaining His wisdom and joy to cope with sadness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“I am bored during church services.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Reviewing the booster shot of valuable messages can sustain the spiritual energy of the Holy Spirit. Summarize the main concept of each message in one sentence, and write them down. Use these statements as affirmations to repeat each morning.</li> <li>· Maintain regular habits of prayer and Bible study with the mindset to actually improve by trying new study ways. Write out prayers, and review each message by going deeper into a word search or a concept. Always pray that God guides you in any quest for a deeper biblical understanding.</li> <li>· Think of the Feast as a launchpad for a new-and-improved year of life. Set new goals. The Feast can be a new beginning.</li> </ul>
Type 3 Isolated Believer Ingrid	Type 4 Enthusiastic Optimist Otto
<p><b>“I don’t want to go home, because then I am all alone again.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Sharing photos with brethren during a church-organized Feast celebration potluck can renew excitement and give brethren ideas for their future plans.</li> <li>· Stay in contact with new friends made during the Feast. Add them as Facebook friends, give them a call, enjoy their pictures and special events, and use social media in a balanced way to keep in touch.</li> <li>· Make and accomplish goals to increase church service and hospitality. Get into some volunteer work or community service, or simply serve your family more fully.</li> <li>· Avoid getting back into the rut. Add something new to your life, such as a pet or hobby or even a gym membership.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“This Feast was the best Feast ever.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Distract yourself by staying busy, and when or if you return to work, bring your renewed attitudes. Coworkers might actually notice.</li> <li>· Start planning for next year’s Feast: Don’t let any moss grow under your feet.</li> <li>· Institute “natural” discussions with your children at the dinner table about their Feast experiences—what they liked or learned. Enable them to stay in touch with new friends also.</li> <li>· Let that spiritual vision enliven you through the transition back into normal life, knowing the hurdles you encounter are nothing compared to the vision of our eternal destiny.</li> </ul>

## Getting Your Message Across

by Robert Berendt

Although some humans do not readily admit that we need one another, we humans most certainly do need other human beings. We need to interact with them, and feeling lonely and unloved is devastating in the long run. All of us have grown up with a large number of unique and specific experiences, abilities, interests, quantities of material we have learned, an I.Q. that we can do little about—and a host of other items that have made us who we are. Interacting with other people can be daunting because we have a mountain of information and material in our minds that we may be trying to convey in a short message, and we may not be adept at delivering some of that information. That mountain of information also may contain foolish thoughts and ideas, besides being poorly assembled and thought through.

The one or ones to whom we are trying to convey information may also have distractions, limitations with understanding, language differences, things like a hearing impairment and a number of other factors that interfere with receiving a clear message. So here we are—somewhat handicapped when we try to get a message to another and somewhat handicapped as listeners. Added to all of that is a problem we have with a short memory (that varies from person to person) and an array of impressions we made or accepted that our mind did not correctly interpret. We can hear without hearing (Matthew 13:13-16). When we are preoccupied, words may come into our ear, but they never seem to reach the brain. In all honesty, we have to admit we have asked “What did you say?” far too many times because we were not paying attention. What can we do to improve that and how can we get others to listen to our message?

With a little thought and practice, we can develop our ability to get our message across. We may not solve the problem altogether, because communication involves the speaker and the hearer, and we can only act on ourselves. What steps can we take that will allow us to reach the best level possible in communicating? There are two parts to good communication—the one of making a clear and easy-to-understand statement and the other to be sure the receiver is listening. That is a two-way street, because just as we want to get our message or point across, so too the other wants to get their message across

to us. In these two areas we can work on being clearer and more concise with our choice of words and, to a limited extent, we can try to be sure the other is actually listening. We can also learn to be good listeners ourselves. Are we able to get his/her attention? If not then the communication is not going to work.

Listening with patience, open-mindedness, controlled biases and an attitude of respect towards other people is a solid foundation that good communication is built upon. When we pay attention and listen, we are improving the major part of understanding the other person. The Bible tells us to be swift to listen and slow to speak—that is when we want to understand another person (James 1:19). Being swift to listen not only ensures that the other’s message is getting across, it shows the speaker that we want to hear and understand and encourages him to be ready to hear our response. There are few things that end a good conversation more quickly than a person who answers before the other has fully expressed his thoughts.

As a trainee in the ministry, I once accompanied a pastor who had a bad habit of answering a question before it was fully asked. More than once, the exasperated person who was trying to explain his problem received an answer that showed the minister completely misunderstood his question. Being interrupted before we are able to say what we want is a sure way to end an exchange.

Active listening involves paying close attention to what the other person is saying, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person says to ensure understanding (“So, what you’re saying is . . .”). Through active listening, we can understand the other person better and demonstrate a skill that he may want to develop. When we are aware that physical hindrances like poor language skills, poor hearing, distractions or other factors are present, we should realize that it will be difficult to get our message across to the other. That simply is wisdom, and we would know the time is not right. There is a right and a wrong time to try to send a message (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Choosing our words with care and with regard to the listener plays an enormous role in clearing the path for getting our message across.

Paul said to learn to speak with grace, seasoned with salt (which adds flavor) so that we may know how we ought to answer each other (Colossians.4:6). Our Creator



In getting our message across we must be active listeners as well as good communicators. Are you able to speak with grace and seasoned with salt?

tells us to come and reason together with Him (Isaiah 1:18), but clearly our minds do not have the ability to reason with God since He is so far above us mentally (Isaiah 55:3-9). He does not mean to tell us that we can teach Him things He does not know, but He encourages our communication, which in the end increases our own understanding.

It is interesting that, when a person is troubled and seeking help, psychologists will tell you that just listening is one of the best ways of helping that person. Being able to formulate our thoughts is the beginning of learning. We can call that prayer, and often when we get up from prayer we understand our own problems better. It involves each person expressing his thoughts. In formulating our words and thoughts, we often understand ourselves better.

There are some parts to getting our message across that are important to know:

(1) Body language, eye contact, gestures and tone of voice are part of the message. Pay attention to the nonverbal message the listener is sending as well as your own.

(2) Avoid rambling; stick to your subject. Clarity is important. Explain your message clearly in few words.

(3) Speaking in a friendly tone, a personal question or simply a smile does a lot to encourage a listener to really hear. Show yourself friendly (Proverbs 18:24).

(4) Show confidence by eye contact and a friendly but firm tone. Don’t make state-

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*“Through active listening, we can understand the other person better and demonstrate a skill that he may want to develop.”*

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ments sound like questions. Avoid sounding aggressive or arrogant.

(5) Empathy is showing others respect and understanding of their point of view. Comments like “you have a good point there” or “I understand your point of view” show you are listening. And as you respect them, you will be more respected.

(6) Think and be ready to add to your opinion as you listen, but not before the person has completed his thought.

(7) People will be more open to hearing you when they know you respect their ideas. Avoid distractions like a cell phone and focus on the conversation.

(8) Pick the right place and time for communication. What you are trying to convey in a message depends a great deal on when, where and how you convey it. Circumstances are not always the same, but giving some thought to the “when” will add to success.

People reach wrong conclusions when they think they cannot communicate. We can all learn new skills, but it takes effort, thought and action. Think about these points—and put them into practice. Find a friendly ear who will help—practice does make perfect. **UN**

# Fixing Moral Injury

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told her it was gonna' be okay. Then she took her last breath and was gone. I killed that little girl.

"I took her broken body to the morgue. Then I went to my office and sobbed. I tried to tell myself I'd done the right thing, but I was besieged with doubt. This innocent child who should have never been in the midst of a war zone . . . I'd stolen her last moments. As if I were God. Yes, there was absolutely nothing we could have done to save her. She was suffering horribly. I knew what I was doing with that syringe loaded with morphine. But wasn't "do no harm" the first principle of medicine? Wasn't my purpose to heal?

"Three months later, I was home in Hawaii. I struggled to get back to my old routine. But my work no longer had the same meaning . . . I was angry all the time. I felt so alone.

"One night, in my sleep, I saw her. The girl. Her face looking up at me, just before she died. I woke screaming. Night after night, the girl haunted my dreams, until I was afraid to go to sleep. There was no one I could talk to. Others hadn't been there. They wouldn't understand" ("An Iraq Veteran Comes to Terms With Moral Injury," *Guideposts*, April 18, 2017).

This type of story could be repeated many times over by soldiers who have had similar feelings of guilt from what they were required to do in a time of war. This is just one example of many. But soldiers are not the only ones who can be affected by moral injury.

Numerous psychological studies have revealed that most people are fully capable of doing terrible things to one another. In fact, some studies have concluded that given the right circumstances—like starvation, national catastrophe and one's family being threatened—that the average person is just six days away from committing murder.

## The Experimenter

Have you heard of Stanley Milgram? He was an American social psychologist who lived from 1933 to 1984. He is best known for his controversial experiment on obedience conducted in the 1960s during his professorship at Yale University. Milgram was influenced by the events of the Jewish Holocaust, especially the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in developing the experiment.

An article in *American Psychologist* in 1990 summed up Milgram's obedience experiments:

"In Milgram's basic paradigm, a subject walks into a laboratory believing that she or he is about to take part in a study of memory and learning. After being assigned the role of a teacher, the subject is asked to teach word associations to a

fellow subject (who in reality is a collaborator of the experimenter). The teaching method, however, is unconventional—administering increasingly higher electric shocks to the learner.

"Once the presumed shock level reaches a certain point, the subject is thrown into a conflict. On the one hand, the strapped learner demands to be set free, he appears to suffer pain, and going all the way may pose a risk to his health. On the other hand, the experimenter, if asked, insists that the experiment is not as unhealthy as it appears to be, and that the teacher must go on. In sharp contrast to the expectations of professionals and laymen alike, some 65% of all subjects continue to administer shocks up to the very highest levels" (Moti Nissani, "A Cognitive Reinterpretation of Stanley Milgram's Observations on Obedience to Authority," *American Psychologist*, 1990.)

You see, whenever the student made an error, the teacher was told to press a lever to shock the student. For each mistake levels of shock would be increased up to a dose of 450 volts (which was really only imaginary). The teachers were told the higher level shocks could be lethal. At a teacher's side a researcher in a long white coat—standing calmly and confidently with an air of authority—commanded the teacher to administer and increase the shocks.

All of the volunteer teachers shocked the students repeatedly—and 65 percent went all the way to the lethal shock level, despite the screams and pleas from the student actor to stop.

This experiment horrified the average citizen because it seemed to demonstrate that the average person was not so different from German citizens in World War II who participated in atrocities under the influence and command of the Nazis.

In these and other similar experiments, we find that otherwise good and responsible people can be induced to act against their conscience and *injure* or potentially kill others.

## A Seared Conscience

The Bible talks about a seared conscience.

Paul wrote, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own *conscience seared* with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2, emphasis added throughout). He also wrote, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but *even their mind and conscience are defiled*" (Titus 1:15).

People are capable of doing horrific things to one another. In the heat of the battle of war we see people capable of doing terrible things to other human

beings—searing their conscience. Soldiers sometimes perform actions that they later find hard to explain and understand after the fact. Many are consumed with guilt and regret.

In times of stress, even outside of war, people can act against their moral code.

Our world has experimented for the past 6,000 years and taken from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It has been a very sad ride. It has been a painful experiment. This world has become injured—morally injured.

A very good example of moral injury from the Bible is that of King David, Uriah and Bathsheba. King David committed murder against Uriah that would haunt him for the rest of his life. Another would be that of Judas Iscariot, who committed suicide, being plagued with guilt after betraying Jesus.

## The Ultimate Solution

So what is the ultimate solution to the pain, suffering and injury humankind has inflicted upon one another for a millennia? How will the healing of the mind and seared consciences begin?

The only true way to eradicate moral injury is through the restoration of all things, the restoration of the law of God! It's the removal of sin and the installation of a new way of doing things. It's a spiritual solution. It's a return to holiness.

Upon the "restoration of all things" spoken of in Acts 3, the law of God will be restored throughout the whole world. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days [the end time], says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and

they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

The global solution to spiritual healing, to overcoming moral injury and sin, is the instilling of the law of God into every person's heart. And it will begin to fully take shape upon the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. A new society will be born.

## We Must Be Cleansed Now

The blood of Jesus Christ our Savior is what cleanses our conscience, is what cleanses our sins, is what cleanses us from immorality and moral injury. It's a spiritual solution.

As people who fully understand the plan God has for the world, we must take our calling seriously and act upon it. We must have a clean conscience and remove sin and all types of moral impurity that can injure our minds.

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*" (Hebrews 10:19-22).

We understand that, even though tragic events lie ahead, the good news is that God will intervene to save humanity and guide mankind into His abundant way of life. Jesus Christ will return to raise us, His followers, from death, and establish God's perfect rule over the earth.

Christ taught us to pray to the Father, "Thy kingdom come." How urgently we need the answer to that prayer and the healing of this world from sin and *moral injury!* **UN**

# Post-Feast Depression

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of his year, reconnecting with physical and spiritual family, feeling fully charged and energized by his Feast experience. But, sadly, he falls into a kind of slump after the Feast.

Which one is yours? Take a look at the following chart of remedies for each type of post-Feast depression.

## Post-Feast Depression Typology According to Markley and Meier (2017)\*

\*Many of the actions recommended have been confirmed to successfully increase overall wellbeing by past PFD patients.

And finally, don't be too hard on yourself if you do get blue or sad. Know that it happens normally to anyone who experiences a highlight event. Time can ease your discomfort. The key is keeping the Feast spirit alive as long as possible, as well as making improved decisions and

choices during the ensuing year. God creates spiritual learning opportunities for us anytime, anywhere, and the best Feast ever can come in a very unexpected way. As long as we make God our priority, He can use a seemingly "missed" opportunity to shape a right heart. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

We hope you all had a meaningful Feast and are able to live a better version of yourself! **UN**

## About the Authors:

*Judy Markley (mental health counselor and marriage and family therapist from Washington) and Ester Meier (psychologist from Germany) met at the Feast in France. Both enjoy late-night talks and fellowship across all ages! They both are convinced that PFD is treatable and can be overcome—especially if you smile.*

# Two Milestones Reached for Women's Enrichment Weekends

## 20 Years and 10,000 Attendees!

This year two significant milestones for Women's Enrichment Weekends in the United Church of God were reached. One milestone was the 20th Women's Enrichment Weekend anniversary this past May in Spokane, Washington, with the theme "Looking Back, Moving Forward."

The Women's Enrichment Weekends began in 1998 in Spokane and then the Seattle/Puget Sound Washington area under the direction and vision of LeeAnn Luker and Dyanne Dick. From that small beginning organized weekends began spreading throughout the country and later worldwide as women heard about or experienced the positive personal and spiritual benefits.

In the past 20 years, there have been over 140 UCG Women's Enrichment Weekends spanning 16 U.S. states and several international areas, including Australia, Africa and the West Indies. With that expansion, we have reached our second big milestone: This year total attendances passed the 10,000 mark! The areas with at

least 10 consecutive Women's Enrichment Weekends as an annual activity are: Spokane, Washington (since 1998), Seattle/Puget Sound, Washington (since 1999), Garden Grove, California (since 2002), Queensland, Australia (since 2002), and Portland, Oregon (since 2006). Interest is growing as more are beginning for the first time.

These weekends were designed to create an environment in which women could actively help one another grow in greater spiritual maturity through presentations, interactive discussions and sharing of valuable lessons learned in life as we all follow God's way. The atmosphere is one of women mentoring women as taught in Titus 2. As well, there are opportunities to make new friends and bond with others in a positive and supportive environment.

With the growth of the Women's Enrichment Weekends and questions from those who wanted to host an event in their area, the Women's Services area of the United Church of God saw a need to consolidate



Top: Women learning to hoola dance at the Mid-Atlantic Women's Enrichment Weekend in Reisterstown, Maryland.

Middle: Women at the Women's Enrichment Weekend in Lusaka, Zambia.

information on the Women of Valor website ([women.ucg.org](http://women.ucg.org)). Here you can find registration information about upcoming weekends, and guidelines and tips for hosting a weekend in your area.

We look forward to more and more areas being able to host Women's Enrichment Weekends with more ladies being able to enjoy and profit from them.

*Jean Updegraff*

## The Refiner's Fire

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molecule by molecule, from an anode to a cathode, to achieve the desired end.

Man has learned to purify various metals, but God is the One who created both the metals and their process of refinement, and He uses it as a lesson. We are to be pure. Christ's return to the earth is portrayed as "but who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:2-3).

Eventually, all the earth will be purified and cleansed, but the time of cleansing and purification for the firstfruits of God's harvest is now. The book of Proverbs includes the observation, "Take away the dross from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry" (Proverbs 25:4). Dross is the scum of impurities that separates and floats on top of the molten metal. Separating the dross is a necessary part of refining, and it has no salvage value. It is simply cast off as waste. Once the dross has been removed the silver can be formed into something of increasing value.

Each of us needs the shed blood of Jesus Christ applied to our sins. At that point in our lives, we are justified or made right before God. We are clean but we are not

yet pure. Purification takes place throughout our lives. It is the casting off of the works of our flesh, that which afflicts us, and our bearing the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23), that which profits to the saving of our souls.

Enduring and overcoming in difficult and stressful circumstances is an important and necessary part of our lives. Peter declared: "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold which perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:6-9).

My wife, Michelle, had a very difficult delivery with our first child. She had to endure 20 hours of hard labor because our daughter's position in the womb prevented her birth. As those hours slowly passed, Michelle began to weaken and we prayed and cried out for God to intervene.

We knew He could easily move our daughter just a little and we wondered why He did not seem to be responding to our need. Our daughter had to finally be delivered by surgery and it was only then the doctor realized that Michelle had a serious medical condition. The placenta was not detaching from the uterus. If a normal delivery had taken place, Michelle

might have bled to death before the resulting tear in the uterine wall could have been addressed.

God is always there, and He is in complete control, but many times we just don't understand. At those times our faith is tested but we must learn to hold on to the assurance that God is perfectly good and His desire on our behalf is for our blessing.

In the book of Habakkuk, the prophet cried out against the increase and continuance of the wicked in the face of the trials and suffering of the righteous. God's response was: "But the just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). The assurance then follows: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). Habakkuk's final response to God is striking. "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the field yields no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

God works with each of us in a loving and personal way. It is easy enough for us to rejoice in times of abundance, but we generally only learn patience when we have to wait. God knows our needs, and He works with us through the choices we make. We must hold on to the things that produce purity and cast off the things that defile. Unfortunately though, sometimes we hold on to the things we most need to cast away: our anger and bitterness over some slight or injustice; the selfish use of

our time and resources; or our pursuit of material comforts and pleasures ahead of seeking God's ways.

I wish I could say that I have always sought God's ways, but the reality is that God has often had to allow me to experience the discomfort of my pursuits until I wanted them no more. We generally try to avoid discomfort, but we must be purified for God's Spirit to flow freely and for the fullness of the fruit of that Spirit to be realized.

God declared seven times in the book of Revelation, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (chapters 2 and 3). We need to consider and apply each of the messages in a personal way. To the church of Laodicea God said: "I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:18-19).

God works with each of us to refine us and bring us to purity. That which is produced by God's Spirit has great value and will never pass away, and that which is not must be removed. Any impurities that remain are a weight that spoils and encumbers us and need to be cast away. God, in His love and mercy, wants to be with us and He wants us to be with Him. But God will not dwell with sin. God is holy and perfect, and we must be refined and purified in order to be like Him. **UN**

## Charlotte Teens Assemble Feast Baskets



Left: Youth from the Charlotte, North, Carolina congregation work hard at filling gift baskets for local shut ins. These baskets were delivered before the Feast.  
Right: Some of the wrapped gift baskets.

The teens of the Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation enjoyed putting together some delightful and very creative Feast baskets on the Sabbath of Sept. 16 for those who would be unable to attend the Feast of Tabernacles this year.

Members were invited to donate appropriate items for the baskets, and there was an overwhelming response!

Some of the thoughtful gifts, which were tailored to individual taste, includ-

ed varieties of tea; coffee and coffee mugs; chocolate truffles; cookies, crackers, and other snacks; notebooks and pens; warm socks; and lap blankets. The teens also included personalized cards containing encouraging words and Bible verses.

The gift baskets were much appreciated by recipients in the Charlotte, Hickory, and Columbia congregations.

*Ailsa Braun*

## Honoring our Senior Brethren for their Continued Service



It was a Saturday evening on Sept. 9, 2017, when the Columbia, Maryland, congregation hosted a "Farewell to Summer" themed dinner in honor of 24 seniors from the Columbia, Maryland, and York, Pennsylvania, congregations.

At this year's dinner, seniors were given a note card from Proverbs 16:31 reminding them that "the silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness."

Before dinner, the youth of the congregation sang "Days of Elijah." The seniors were served a delightful meal by teens and young adults, which included iceberg wedge salad, braised beef short ribs and salmon in banana leaves, along with sides to complement those main dishes. Many took pleasure in a glass of peach sangria, and the meal was completed with peach cobbler ala mode.



The seniors applauded those who prepared the dishes and those who served the meals. Steve Diggins addressed the seniors and conveyed the congregation's appreciation for their service since they serve in many ways. After the dinner concluded, several attendees expressed their enthusiasm for next year's dinner.

*Rhonda Diggins*

## Prestonsburg, Kentucky, Church Bids Farewell to Leo and Barb Sancho



The Prestonsburg, Kentucky, congregation bid Leo and Barb Sancho goodbye early this summer as they made a move to the South.

The congregation enjoyed cake with them, prior to sending them off to their new location. The relocation of our friends is Murfreesboro, Tennessee's, gain!

*Kevin Call*

## Women's Club Afternoon Tea

On Aug. 3, the Los Angeles women's club hosted a garden tea party for the ladies of the Los Angeles congregation. It was held at the home of Ralph and Ingrid Helge.

There were almost 40 ladies of all ages from 4-month-old Hannah Macaraeg to 82 year old Elida Bricio in attendance. Mrs. Bricio made beautiful corsages from artificial flowers for all the ladies.

The ladies enjoyed a variety of aromatic teas, little tea sandwiches, scones and dainty desserts.

There was also a program, emceed by Erin Ellis, which included a musical presentation by Ingrid Helge and Bonnie Shemet and three speakers, Jacqueline Milner of the Redlands congregation, Suzanne Lavaty and Laurel Fish.

The main thing that was noticed was that the ladies enjoyed being with each other and were building lasting friendships.

*Patti Josifek*



Above: Elida Bricio at the Women's Tea.

Below: Hannah Macaraeg enjoys the tea too!

## Change

**Continued from page 1**

regional pastors advise the home office on needs and urgent priorities.

The essential responsibilities of a regional pastor are to develop a team concept with the region and to be a consultant. He will mediate in areas of conflict. Also, he is an advisor to MMS through regular conferences and will assist the men in his region so they can better do their jobs.

In our meetings we discussed each region and the manpower needs. Also we talked about proposed changes to the ministerial ordination approval process.

The regional pastors mentioned that the meetings were instructive, cordial and most helpful. This group plans to meet regularly by Web conference and further face-to-face interaction.

Here are a few quotes from those who

will be serving as regional pastors:

*Jim Tuck:* "There can be no higher honor than to serve with those dedicated and loyal to the highest calling on earth. My wife, Joan, and I enjoy serving in the ministry of Jesus Christ and working with the Southwest region ministers and their wives."

*Steve Nutzman:* "The recent regional pastor conference reminded us that the ministry exists to serve God and His elect. The job of a regional pastor continues to focus on being a brother in Christ to our fellow elders as a friend and helper in their ministry, and now includes some expanded responsibilities to further these goals. The conference renewed our focus and our spirit of unity."

*Mark Welch:* "I am looking forward to serving all congregations, members and elders in the South Central region. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to help build and develop unity in God's Church and consider it a great privilege to serve in this way as a regional pastor. Thank you!" **UN**

# Announcements



**Adria Renae Miller**

Sept. 6, 2017



**Jacob and Sophia Call**

Aug. 13, 2017



**Michael and Lindsay Tedesco**

July 16, 2017



**John Cafourek**

May 15, 1947-Oct. 12, 2017

## Births

### Adria Renae Miller

Adria Renae Miller was born on Sept. 6, 2017, at 12:33 p.m. Her birth weight was 8 lbs., 5 oz., and she measured 19.5 in. long. Her parents, Mark and Amanda Miller, are overjoyed with the blessing of their first-born daughter!

## Weddings

### Jacob and Sophia Call

Jacob and Sophia (DelSignore) Call recently married in a beautiful, sunny, outdoor ceremony in Heneker, New Hampshire. The happy occasion occurred on Sunday, Aug. 13, with about 150 family members and friends in attendance. They were honored with an Ohio reception on Aug. 27 with about 100 people. The couple reside in McDermott, Ohio, and attend the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation.

### Michael and Lindsay Tedesco

On July 16, 2017, Michael Tedesco of the Columbia, Maryland/Northern Virginia, congregation, and Lindsay Wildt, of the Cincinnati East congregation, were married. Friends and family from near and far attended the beautiful outdoor wedding near Lindsay's hometown in Amelia, Ohio. Richard Kennebeck, a long-time friend and elder, performed the ceremony. Michael and Lindsay met during this past Winter Family Weekend. The couple now resides in Herndon, Virginia, near the DC area, where Michael holds a career at an IT company while Lindsay focuses on her home-based business.

## Obituaries

### John Cafourek

John Cafourek was born in South Dakota, the youngest of five children born to Lloyd and Erna Cafourek. He grew up in a home filled with music. His father played

several instruments and encouraged the children to play. John played the concertina, clarinet and saxophone. The family played for parades and dances. John even received an offer to join a polka band.

He grew up working on the family farm—gardening, hauling hay, killing/dressing chickens, tending sheep, milking cows and joking around with his siblings. When the rest of the family traveled to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, he was needed at home to milk their 18 cows by hand, morning and night. He was able to attend his first church service and Feast when he went to Ambassador College.

John enjoyed learning. In high school he went to Boys' State and was a member of the National Honor Society. He was valedictorian of his class and was offered scholarships to several colleges and universities. John chose to attend Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, graduating in 1969 with a bachelor of arts degree. He received a masters degree in psychological counseling from Southeast Missouri State University in 1978, graduating with honor, summa cum laude.

While at Ambassador John played clarinet in the band, sitting next to a spunky southern girl, Sandy Ghent. They were close friends for four years. Senior year she knew John was "the one," and shortly after graduation he had a light-bulb moment as well. He proposed, and they were married in November of 1969. Together they enjoyed raising their two daughters in the many areas where he pastored congregations: Nebraska, North Dakota, Missouri, Mississippi, Washington and later Oregon.

John and Sandy loved to travel, and every five years of marriage they took cross-country or international trips together. John loved knowing about his Czech heritage (as well as German and Norwegian), and he was able to travel to the Czech Republic twice, once with Sandy and once with his brother Harold. John and Sandy had been looking forward to their 50th year of marriage and 50th year of service in the ministry in two years.

John also loved his role as "Papa" of eight grandchildren. He was so very proud of his daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren for their accomplishments and interests and especially enjoyed their individuality.

John was currently pastoring United Church of God congregations in Salem, Eugene, and Roseburg, Oregon. He also directed speech clubs for men, gave seminars on abuse and addictions and counseled and preached nationally and internationally in places such as Jordan, Estonia, Australia, Jamaica, New Zealand, England and Canada. He was respected as a good listener and understanding counselor. John enjoyed mentoring the young men in the Church to teach the Scriptures and become leaders for God's service. In 2004 he became chair of the United Church of God's Focused Education Program. He authored many articles on addiction for Church publications, including the website *Breaking Free* (<http://breakingfree.ucg.org>). However, one of the greatest loves of his ministry was to help children build a special relationship with God at an early age. (He himself read through the entire Bible at age 10.) He directed the United Church of God Northwest Preteen Camp, for children age 5-12, with great passion from 2002 to 2017.

John had a very kind, patient and caring way about him. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend and will be greatly missed, but we are celebrating all that he was and all that he will be in God's Kingdom!

John is preceded in death by his parents, Lloyd and Erna Cafourek. His brother Harold lives in Oregon, sister Joyce Purdy in Ohio, brother Jim in Virginia, brother Dan in Oklahoma, and he has four nephews and three nieces. He is survived by his wife Sandy, daughter Roxanne Sears, son-in-law Jonathan, and six grandsons: Austin-18, Cameron-15, Dylan-10, Kane-7, Jackson-5, and Logan-3. He is also survived by his daughter Carmella Weis, son-in-law Berkeley, and two grandchil-



**Florence May MacConnell**

May 25, 1934-June 27, 2017

dren: Autumn-19 and Warren-18 of the Portland, Oregon, UCG congregation.

### Florence May MacConnell

Florence May MacConnell, age 83, passed away peacefully with her husband at her side on Sept. 1, 2017. She had waged a courageous battle with a rare blood disorder for many years.

Florence was born in Vermont on May 25, 1934. She and Jim were married on June 27, 1953, and just celebrated their 64th anniversary. They were both baptized in 1973, and in July 1998 were ordained together as a deacon and deaconess to serve the Sequim, Washington, congregation.

Florence is survived by her husband Jim; two sons, Rodney and Charles; and five grandchildren. She was always a cheerful, gracious, serving lady and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

**Announcements:** Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to [UN@ucg.org](mailto:UN@ucg.org). We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author's and photographer's names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you'd like photos returned.

# Report on Angola Visit

by Kathy de Campos

During the week of July 28-Aug. 2, Jorge and I departed from Cincinnati for Angola. En route, we stopped over in Frankfurt, Germany.

This was my second trip to Angola. Last July we travelled to Huambo, but this trip would be to Luanda. Luanda is the capital of Angola and one of the largest cities with approximately 15 congregations.

The brethren welcomed us at the Luanda International Airport and escorted us to the church hall in Luanda, where we met other church members. After a brief song and prayer of thanks to God for our safe arrival, we enjoyed singing hymns and talking with brethren. We also visited the little school the church runs where the pre-K to grade 3 children were preparing for their morning classes. After our very pleasant welcome, we were taken to our hotel for the remainder of the day. Before the Sabbath we had a brief leadership meeting to discuss spiritual instruction needed and different challenges the Church is having in this society.

The next morning, Jorge and I attended Sabbath services in the central Luanda congregation with approximately 300 brethren from different areas. The main message was about the Church's mission

to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31). The value and meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was explained and why it can pay for all our sins. The sermon then covered what it really means to us in a practical day-to-day life.

Several choirs did special music, which was outstanding, particularly the children's choir. In the afternoon we had a Bible study for over two hours discussing the plan of salvation and the next key events to watch for before Christ's second coming. We had about 150 brethren attending the Bible study.

On Sunday, we attended a wedding and were amazed at how beautifully organized it was. The music and songs, which accompanied the wedding ceremony, added to the festivity.

Leadership training followed on Monday and Tuesday. Topics ranged from sermonette training, the importance of sound doctrine, rules of interpretation and the importance of our calling. The sessions were highly interactive and generated lively question-and-answers sessions on many practical day-to-day questions, such as how to handle anniversaries and birthdays,



conducting various ceremonies (such as weddings and funerals) and the vision of the Church.

Wednesday was our last day in Luanda. I was able to address the ladies on the topic of the "Power of Encouragement." Over 100 ladies attended the seminar and were all well dressed in similar matching dresses. After our question-and-answer session, we ended our day by leaving the Church hall with the ladies all singing in unison. It was, indeed, very moving, touching and a perfect ending to our visit to Luanda. Until next time! **UN**



Top: All the ladies in Angola who attended the seminar by Kathy de Campos gave.  
Below: Kathy de Campos with a some of the ladies.

## Tampa Congregation Helps With Hurricane Irma Cleanup



On Sunday, Sept. 17, 29 members of the Tampa congregation met at the home of our 91-year-old widow, Betty Oldroyd, to help clean up her yard from the recent Hurricane Irma. The house had a great number of tree limbs and debris scattered throughout the entire yard. We put together a request for help, and men, women, boys and girls all showed up to work to put things back in shape.

A project which would have taken much of the day was completed in two hours because of the many who volunteered to help out. It not only was a needed Good Works project, it was also fun to spend time with each other while helping out one of our members. Projects such as this help our congregations become closer as a family as we work together to serve each other.

Stan Martin



Top: Everyone who worked together to help Betty Oldroyd clean up the mess and damage from Hurricane Irma in Florida.  
Bottom: A photo of her home before the cleanup.

## 2017 Cincinnati Winter Family Weekend

by Frank Dunkle

For over two decades now, the Winter Family Weekend has provided an opportunity for friends and family in God's Church to gather for fun and fellowship at the time when many students and workers have a break in their normal schedules. Cincinnati hosted the event in the 1990s before it moved to Lexington, Kentucky, then to Louisville, and finally back to Southwestern Ohio in 2011.

This winter, the Great Wolf Lodge will again provide a comfortable setting for the WFW, holding room rates at the same level as the past two years. Along with a Friday evening Bible study and church services, the Sabbath will also feature seminars for teens and adults, with youth instruction for preteens. During evenings at the Great Wolf conference center will host dances, a game room, a career networking event, a performing arts showcase, a band showcase and Jelly's Game Show. The prom dress exchange and ABC seminars will occur during the days, and, of course, the waterpark will be open all day.

Nearby sports facilities will be the site for three days of volleyball and basketball, along with two opportunities for preteens to enjoy organized games together. Most participants form teams in advance, but individuals have the opportunity to form



teams or join existing ones upon arriving. All of the events—but especially the sports—benefit greatly by having people register at the WFW website. If you plan to join us, please don't stop at reserving a hotel room, please also assist us in planning by visiting [www.ucg.org/members/winter-family-weekend/winter-family-weekend-2017](http://www.ucg.org/members/winter-family-weekend/winter-family-weekend-2017) and registering.

It seems hard to imagine a better way for more than a thousand of God's people to share a few days together at the start of winter. The majority of participants usually come from within a day's drive, but it is common for people to travel from across the country, or even overseas to join in the fun. Winter Family Weekend will be here soon, so now is the time to make plans! **UN**

What's New In MEDIA?  
BEYOND  
TODAY

Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>Why Does God Allow Suffering?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Why Does God Allow Suffering?</i>	Nov. 12-18
<i>Create In Me a Clean Heart</i>	Gary Petty	<i>Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion</i>	Nov. 19-25
<i>A Prophet, a President and a People</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy</i>	Nov. 26-Dec. 2
<i>Which Bible Translation Should I use?</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>How to Understand the Bible</i>	Dec. 3-9
<i>Shocking Teachings of Jesus: The End of the World</i>	Steve Myers	<i>Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns</i>	Dec. 10-16
<i>When Was Jesus Born?</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>Jesus Christ: The Real Story</i>	Dec. 17-23
<i>Help Your Kids Keep the Faith</i>	Gary Petty	<i>Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension</i>	Dec. 24-30
<i>Is the Rapture Wrong?</i>	Steve Myers	<i>The Rapture Versus the Bible</i>	Dec. 31-Jan.6

# Updated UCG Roku Channel is Now Live



The highly anticipated, premium version of the United Church of God channel on Roku is now operational. Watch live and archived Sabbath services from your Roku streaming device.

This new version of the Church's sermon and live webcast channel has several features that the original version did not include. Here is what you will now be able to access:

- Live Webcasts from the home office.
- Featured Sermon Videos.
- Video Sermons.
- Audio Sermons.
- UCG Short Films.
- Jelly videos.

If you have a Roku streaming video device, please update or install your UCG channel now. You can find it on Roku with a search for "United Church of God."

As you have opportunity, please rate the channel. The higher the rating the more visible the channel becomes in the Roku channel store.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers to our Father in heaven for his blessings upon the work of the Church. May we use the resources at our disposal to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God with power and effectiveness.

## UNITED NEWS

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## The Northwest Family Weekend

The Portland, Oregon congregation is excited to host the 52nd annual Northwest Family Weekend from Dec. 22-26. Nestled on the scenic Columbia River, the Red Lion Hotel will be the location for the weekend's activities that can be enjoyed by the whole family.

The weekend will include Bible studies and seminars for all ages, speakers workshop, and of course, fun, fellowship and dancing. Teens will enjoy a "Night on the Red Carpet" and the family dance will go back in time to the "Roaring 20s!" The weekend wouldn't be complete without some recreation for the whole family: bowling, a sports day (which will include a volleyball clinic), volleyball and basketball scrimmages, pre-teen sports and the weekend will be finished off with snow sports on Mount Hood. It will make for a truly memorable weekend.

Start planning now to attend the Northwest Family Weekend, and enjoy the great fellowship and fun for all ages! Watch for details at [www.ucgpdx.org](http://www.ucgpdx.org). Facebook: NWWeekend UCG Portland. If you have questions email us at: [nweekend@gmail.com](mailto:nweekend@gmail.com).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Nov. 23:** Thanksgiving

**Dec. 4-7:** Council of Elders Meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio

**Dec. 22-26:** Winter Family Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio

**Dec. 22-26:** Northwest Winter Family Weekend

**Dec. 27-Jan. 8:** Winter Camp, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

