



December 15, 2017

I hope those who participated in last Sabbath’s marriage seminar found it helpful. I know it was a long day for everyone and the Schreibers knew that some could not stay for the entire time. Sixty-five people stayed for all of the sessions which was a good number.

This Sabbath is the monthly Bible study and potluck in Murfreesboro. We will take at least some of the Bible study time to conduct our yearly congregational meeting. The Nashville congregational meeting is planned for next Saturday night after services.

The Proverbs 31 Women’s Study is this Sunday at 10:00 am at the Keller’s house. This week’s Spokesman Club has been cancelled. Young Adults: don’t forget the YA Study on the evening of December 30.

The trip Kim and I took last week to Texas to conduct Mr. Burk McNair’s funeral was a real adventure. We left on Friday morning with the anticipation of having a Sabbath dinner with our son and his wife. We arrived in the middle of an ice and snow storm in Atlanta, GA. It became impossible for planes to get in or out of the airport, ground traffic was at a standstill, and there were no motel rooms available in the city. We ended up spending 24 hours trapped in the Atlanta airport. The only positive thing was the employees were also stuck so some restaurants were opened or we would have been without food. We finally arrived in San Antonio late Saturday night and attended the funeral the next day. It was no way to spend a Sabbath.

Nashville Deuteronomy 6 Classes

We will be starting Deuteronomy 6 class again December 16th. Classes will be held during sermon time, so kids can come down stairs immediately after announcements. Classes are still designed to be a review of the monthly family study guide that can be found online at the following link: [Family Study Guides](#) Our first lesson will cover the sixth commandment- thou shall not murder.

Thanks, Julie and Kristin

Combined Teen Bible Study and Activity Tomorrow Night

The next combined Teen Bible Study and Activity will be on Saturday evening, December 16th, beginning at 6:00 pm. It will be held at the Youth For Christ building (Murfreesboro's usual church hall) at 906 Ridgely Road, Murfreesboro. Beef barbeque sandwiches will be provided and it would be appreciated if everyone brought a side and a drink. Following the study we will play novelty games and hopefully coax some old dudes into participating again. Please call or text Debbie Haggard at 615-631-3196 so we can have a head count. See you then!

Tim Haggard

Winter Family Weekend - Professional Networking Event

For all young adults coming to the Winter Family Weekend in Cincinnati, please join us Saturday evening from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. for a professional networking event! Meet a number of leaders from within our congregations who are established in their careers and interested to share their experiences with young adults working to expand and develop professionally. Meet with accomplished members in many career areas including accounting and finance, information technology, HR, engineering, entrepreneurial, teaching, and health care, etc. This year, we are also offering resources to help in resume writing and skills assessment. Snacks and a cash bar will be available. This will be a great opportunity to network with accomplished leaders in their fields as well as with other young adults.

6th Annual UCG Atlanta Ski Trip in Gatlinburg, Tennessee

The UCG Atlanta and Buford, Georgia congregations will again be sponsoring the 6th Annual UCG Atlanta Ski Trip in Gatlinburg, Tennessee on February 4th (Sunday), in 2018. We invite those in your area to participate.

Cost

We have contracted with Ober Gatlinburg for a flat fee of \$69 per person for skiers and \$79 for snowboarders. This is their best group rate! The cost of skiing and snowboarding includes equipment, a lesson, a day lift ticket (from 9 AM - 10 PM), and a pass for going up and down the mountain on Ober Gatlinburg's Aerial Tramway.

Reservation Limits

Our contract limits us to 25 skiers and 25 snowboarders. Reservations will be accepted on a first-come basis. If you want to participate, the deadline for receiving the \$10 deposit this year is January 19th.

How to Make A Reservation

To reserve your place, please access the reservation order form complete it, include your \$10 deposit per person (cash or check only), and return in the mail to Bob McCurdy (his address is on the form). The form can be found in the Download section to the right. Be sure to include \$10 for each person that will participate. The remainder of the \$69 or \$79/per person cost must be paid by check or cash to Philip Aust at 8 AM on the morning of February 4th when we gather to ski and snowboard. No credit or debit cards will be accepted at that time. Reservation forms must be received by Jan 19th!

February 4th

We will meet at Ober Gatlinburg at 8 AM on Sunday, February 4th, so skiers and snowboarders may be processed and get up the mountain as early as possible.

About Ober Gatlinburg

You can learn more about Ober Gatlinburg location, including skiing, attractions and the amusement park, located in Gatlinburg, Tennessee (in the Great Smoky Mountains) at the link below. <http://www.obergatlinburg.com/>

Hotels/Motels

For those who want to travel to Gatlinburg early and stay overnight on Friday and/or Saturday evening (Feb 3rd or 4th), the following hotels are located very near Ober Gatlinburg's Aerial Tramway:

The Clarion Inn and Suites
1100 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-5656

The Hampton Inn
967 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-4878

The Hampton Inn – Gatlinburg Historic Nature Trail
520 Historic Nature Trail, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-4933

The Quality Inn Creekside
125 Leconte Creek Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-4865

The Hilton Garden Inn
635 River Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-0048

Attendees are responsible for checking rates and reviews for these hotels.

Sabbath Services

Sabbath Services will be held in Knoxville, Tennessee on the weekly Sabbath, February 3rd. For more information about the Knoxville church and services, click here: <http://knoxville.ucg.org/content/church-meeting-location-time>
If you have additional questions, please email Bob McCurdy at ram19@bellsouth.net or Philip Aust at philip_aust@ucg.org.

Thanks much,
Philip Aust

Pastor, United Church of God, aia
Atlanta and Buford, Georgia
770-529-1690

Special Note: The UCG Atlanta Snow Ski Trip is predicated on acceptable ski conditions. Please check the atlanta.ucg.org website periodically for updates and announcements.

eNews from Ministerial and Member Services

Issue 304

December 14, 2017

Personal From the President...

Dear fellow servants of God,

This week, we recorded two new *Beyond Today* programs at the home office: program 344, "God's Hand on the Nations" and program 345, "Shocking Teachings of Jesus: The Kingdom of God." When we have the monthly recording sessions, it's an entire media department effort, as everyone works on the recording process simultaneously as camera operators, studio controllers, teleprompters and more.

This week, Bev and I were happy for pastor Scott Hoefker and his wife, Gayle, to stay with us while he taught a ten-hour Ambassador Bible College module about common mental health challenges addressed from the perspective of using God's Word as therapy to heal.

This coming Sunday, December 17, Darris and Debbie McNeely and Steve and Kathe Myers will be leaving for Africa to conduct training and ABC classes. Once in South Africa, the McNeelys will travel to Zambia for 3 days of training with leaders there while the Myers go to Malawi to conduct sessions. They will then regroup and travel to Bloemfontein,

South Africa, for a week-long youth and family camp where they will teach from their ABC curriculum. The sessions in South Africa will bring together leaders from Angola, Brazil and Zimbabwe. Jorge de Campos will provide Portuguese translation.

The Real Jesus

When my December issue of the *National Geographic* arrived, I was startled by the cover article headline: *The Real Jesus*. We once had a booklet by that title. So, what was my much loved *National Geographic* going to say to enlighten me about my Lord and Master? Would it indeed make my Savior more real?

For the past 60 years I've subscribed to *National Geographic*, a wonderful magazine about geography, geology, archaeology and other sciences. Increasingly, its articles have wandered into the domain of spirituality, faith and morality. Articles have recently appeared about transgender issues, lying, and now: Jesus! While I appreciate *National Geographic's* attempt to report on archaeological evidence of Jesus, I found it to be slanted towards skeptics and non-believers whose theoretical bias is not to rejoice in finding supportive evidence, but to continually highlight alleged contradictions and anything that takes away from the Gospel accounts, which are the strongest evidence of the real Jesus.

The questions about Jesus are relevant and legitimate. As *NatGeo* author and former archaeologist Kristin Romey points out, some two billion people today have claimed some degree of belief in Jesus as simultaneously historical and personally influential. So, we ask: Was Jesus indeed the very Son of the all-powerful God of the Bible, and the Savior of all humanity? Or was He a first-century mythical revolutionary advocate of local regime change?

In the article, *National Geographic* draws out some physical evidence and scholarly opinion--pro and con--about the existence and the claims of Jesus. As mentioned, we have astonishingly well-preserved ancient records--notably in the form of the four Gospels and the New Testament book of Acts--as well as references about Jesus from Roman historians like Tacitus. But a never-ending assault on the divine origin, mission and purpose of Jesus has been underway for centuries. The assault never succeeds, but that doesn't stop people from trying. In the "From the Editor" column, *NatGeo's* Editor-in-Chief Susan Goldberg praises Kirsten Romey and concludes: "How gratifying in this season of goodwill, to see the scientific and the spiritual coexist." I felt that the "scientific" received the greater respect, with doubters outnumbering believers.

National Geographic cites the biased work of the so-called Jesus Seminar, a group (essentially disbanded since 2006) of revisionist scholars who once tried to deconstruct the ancient biblical accounts, ladling out their human opinion of what they thought might have happened in the Gospels and what they labeled as far-fetched. *NatGeo* further cites what they call "a bombshell of a book," the 1990 *Historical Jesus*, where one of the former Jesus Seminar participants serves up a warmed-over claim that Jesus was simply a first-century sarcastic wandering sage.

This revisionist nonsense about Jesus has appeared and reappeared off and on for centuries. The Apostle Paul identified those who didn't like to retain God in their knowledge as out and out "haters of God" in the last verses of Romans 1. Over the centuries, liberal theologians have attempted to mix biblical tenets with science and explain that the miraculous works of a powerful God were myth or fiction.

Continuing archaeological finds can and do serve an excellent purpose in both confirming and illuminating the magnificent story of the biblical account. As *NatGeo* author Romey correctly points out, from archaeology's point of view, "Absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence." In other words, just because something hasn't been found yet (or may never be found) to confirm a given textual reference, that in itself is not "proof" that the textual narrative is less than accurate.

Romey accurately quotes an important point from one scholar: "Thanks to archaeology, there's been a big change in thinking--from Jesus the cosmopolitan Hellenist to Jesus the observant Jew." The fact that Jesus was born into the

biblical tribe of Judah and lived and died as a practicing Jew may be a shock to some traditionalists. But that's exactly what happened. Jesus' practices of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, upholding the law of God (Matthew 5:17-20) and putting God first--"You shall love the Lord with *all* your heart, with *all* your soul, with *all* your mind, and with *all* your strength" (Mark 12:30, emphasis added), all stood out in stark contrast to the times, both then and now.

A major part of Jesus' early ministry was spent in northern Galilee near critical trade routes. As *National Geographic* acknowledges, archaeology may have found the remains of the very synagogue where Jesus preached in Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Gospels are careful to record that Jesus performed an astonishing degree of "mighty works"--supernatural acts inexplicable by human means--in that region where numerous trade routes existed (Matthew 11:20-24). Think about how stories and summaries of these "mighty works" might have been carried by commercial traders to all corners of the Roman Empire, thus laying the foundation for the later spreading of the gospel.

The Real Jesus/The Unknown God

Paul illuminated the proof of the real Jesus to a most improbable group: ancient Greek philosophers. On one of his extensive journeys, the apostle Paul made his way down the Grecian peninsula, walking some 70 miles from northern Thessalonica to Athens in the south. A learned scholar himself, Paul immediately "reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks" (Acts 17:17, New International Version) about Jesus and the truth of the gospel.

But he expanded his outreach in this legendary epicenter of human philosophical thought. He took the gospel to "the marketplace," an area where public speaking and discourse on various topics was permitted and encouraged. Paul immediately attracted major attention, "because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18). Paul sought to satisfy the Greeks with proof and testimony about the real Jesus!


So, Paul set out on a unique course. He addressed a special group of philosophers and local officials on Mars Hill (the Areopagus). The parallels to today are amazing. Paul piqued their interest with a reference to a nearby monument inscribed "To the Unknown God." Paul thus declared: "The One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23).

Tapping into their professed quest for truth, Paul skillfully outlined the mighty attributes of God, the very Father of Jesus, even quoting their own poets to show the widespread recognition of these important truths. He concluded with the fact that this mighty God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has ordained" (Acts 17:31). This, of course, is a direct reference to Jesus.

Paul proclaimed the historical and personal validity of Jesus before possibly the most difficult of all audiences. He authoritatively showed them the Real Jesus.

The last sentence of the article is actually my last word about who the Real Jesus is to me: "for true believers, their faith in the life, death and Resurrection of the Son of God will be evidence enough." I am thankful daily for having found the Real Jesus who still, for most of the world, is the Unknown God. As Paul said on Mars Hill, in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:20). I am so happy that this is the reality and foundation of my life. I am hoping that more people can come to this realization through the Work that God does in and through us.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

From Ministerial and Member Services...

Pastoral Changes



Stan and Judy Erickson

Mr. Stan Erickson has been named the new pastor for the United Church of God congregations in Coleman and Waco, Texas. Mr. Erickson and his wife, Judy, have recently moved to the Coleman congregation, which had been pastored by Clyde Hubbard. Mr. Erickson will also begin pastoring the Waco congregation, previously pastored by Rod Foster. Mr. Foster will continue to pastor the Austin and San Antonio, Texas, congregations.

Passing the Baton

On December 2, 2017, the Coleman, Texas, congregation of the United Church of God honored their pastors with a surprise ceremony. Gratefulness and appreciation for past and future service was expressed to the retiring pastor and his wife, Clyde and Bobbie Hubbard, as well as to the new incoming pastor and his wife, Stan and Judy Erickson.



Clyde and Bobbie Hubbard

Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard moved to the Coleman church area from Buffalo, New York, in 1996. They first served the Coleman brethren as local elder and deaconess until 2011, when they were asked to assume the role of pastor and wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard, though retiring, will continue to live in the area and provide support and service to the new pastor and his wife as well as the congregation.

Stan and Judy Erickson moved into the area in September of this year from Austin, Texas. The Ericksons have been in the ministry for 35 years and have a long record of faithful service to God's people.

Mr. Mark Welch, the area's regional pastor, was able to join the congregation on this special occasion. In his sermon, Mr. Welch encouraged all to continue to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered. After the church service, he led the congregation in welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Erickson and thanking Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard. A special potluck meal and cake was enjoyed by all.