



Winter Family Weekend 2017

by Chelsea Dawe

Another enjoyable Winter Family Weekend has been successfully completed!

Approximately 1,200 brethren from around the United States (as well as other countries) attended this year's activities, which included three dances, several seminars, a Bible study, game nights, a performing arts expo, band showcase, karaoke and, of course, the ever-popular basketball and volleyball tournaments.

Attendees gathered at Great Wolf Lodge in Mason, Ohio, for the seventh year in a row. This year's events began the night of Friday, Dec. 22, with a Bible study presented by Jay Ledbetter, followed by a cheese and wine social for singles.

Sabbath morning promised many opportunities for edification and fellowship. The children enjoyed youth instruction, while teens and adults were engaged in seminars covering topics such as dating and marriage, reaching out to non-Church members, decision-making and discovering the challenges affecting our brethren in southern Africa.



Professor Puddy made a special appearance at the Jelly Gameshow this past Winter Family Weekend!

Before Sabbath services, visitors had the opportunity to tour the home office in Milford. As goes the Winter Family Weekend tradition, the young adults presented several beautiful and uplifting special music selections during the sermonette time slot.

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During the family dance at the Winter Family Weekend children sat near as brethren played in the band called J. Rowdy and the Noisemakers. Everyone enjoyed the family favorites played by the band.

Update on New Video Recording Studio

by Victor Kubik

Recently the December quarterly meetings of the Council of Elders were held at the home office in Cincinnati, Ohio. One of the key areas of discussion related to the proposed new video recording studio. I am happy to report that the project will be moving forward.

Thank you for your support of this venture and your generous tithes and offerings that support the work of the Church in fulfilling its mission of preaching the gospel and preparing a people. The world we preach to has changed dramatically over the last 20 years, and we are living in the midst of a technological and cultural revolution.

As is prophesied in Daniel 12, people in the end times are indeed running to and

fro as knowledge is increasing exponentially. People are searching for answers to the overwhelming issues confronting them daily. They turn to the Internet and other video platforms for answers. It is for this reason that the Church relies heavily on the Internet and video production in proclaiming a hopeful gospel of God's solutions to the dilemmas of this end-time world.

In an electronic world filled with religious voices, the United Church of God has a powerful presence—presently ranking 14th in the world among all Christian denomination websites! Our Media and Communications Services department produces a weekly television program that is broadcast around the world on the Word Network and streamed on various

platforms including our own UCG.org website, YouTube, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Roku.

In addition to producing a weekly TV program, the media department produces *Beyond Today* dailies, UCG short films and several other videos that are valuable tools in proclaiming the gospel to the world—while also serving the members of the Church. All of this work is accomplished by our staff working in very small and cramped quarters—and some of our media employees and information technology staff share the same small space.

One year ago, in December 2016, the Media and Communications Services operation manager and I asked the Council of Elders to discuss the need for more working space and video recording

facilities. The project called for a separate video studio to be added to the south side of the current building. Agreeing that this was a valid need, the Council passed a resolution establishing a restricted fund for construction of a new video recording studio. This allowed money to be donated specifically for the new facility.

A year has now gone by since that resolution was passed, and I'd like to bring the membership and ministry up-to-date on where we now stand with the project and its funding. Architectural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and site drawings have now been completed. From these drawings, costs have been more accurately estimated to be \$750,000 for construction

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BY THE NUMBERS

16,134

is the circulation for the November issue of the UN. The highest number recorded to date.

Connecting With Our Brethren in Malawi

by Linda Merrick

Lewis VanAusdle, a recently ordained minister, was asked to go to the southern African nation of Malawi for his first pastoral assignment. At the beginning of 2017 he moved there with his wife, Lena. Some time ago they both discussed how they could best serve the Church. They decided as individuals, and together as husband and wife, that they would serve God in any way in which they were asked. They both assumed that this meant they would just do simple things like lead songs, set up chairs for services or mop the floor. Neither expected that Lewis would be asked to be a minister. God definitely had other plans for their lives.

Many times ministers are placed in areas where there is a need, where there is a flock that needs a shepherd. But this assignment was much more than just about teaching—it was about connecting, about establishing relationships and about developing friendships that will last for a lifetime.

I had the opportunity to go to Malawi and spend some time with Lewis and Lena to see how things were going for them there. While I was there, their year-long assignment was coming to an end, and they were just starting to prepare for their return to the United States.

Living in a foreign country can change your outlook on life and how you see or understand the world. Lewis said that this past year helped him become more confident in pastoring. His experiences made him more independent in organizing a congregation and counseling with members.

“I like to think that if we didn’t do anything else while in Malawi, that we have visited people,” said Lewis. One of the biggest aspects of their time in Malawi was focused on getting to know, visit, help and connect with the people.

Twice while I was in Malawi visiting the VanAusdles, we randomly stopped at church members’ homes and stayed and talked for an hour or two or three. Once

we made plans to visit with a member, and another time we invited members over for a dinner. While at church services it was evident that everyone was excited to be together to talk—like God’s people in any country. It is very important for both members and ministers to make an effort to spend time together, to get to know each other and establish these relationships. “There is something very beautiful about a group of God’s people who are able to come together to learn and to teach, to fellowship and work together,” reminds Lewis.

While I only spent a week and a half visiting Malawi, I was able to talk and connect with the brethren to learn a little bit about them. It has also been nice to be able to stay in contact with them since being back in the U.S.A.

Juliana Kachali, a young adult from the Lilongwe, Malawi, congregation, says that it has been great getting to know others from other countries when they come to visit. It put a different perspective on her life and helped her build her faith in God. Juliana said: “When you spend time with other people you hear how they managed to hold on to the truth and set the right example, and it has made me to be a better person than before.”

Wiza Temwani Mkorongo, another young adult, said that being connected to Church members has had a great impact on his life. “I strongly believe that God is a family, and at this time my churchmates are my family since we all have one goal and are led by one Spirit,” he said.

He further explains how important communication is and how he tries to call, text, visit and fellowship when he can with others. It is good to get to know other people from the Church, whether it be on Facebook or Whatsapp—helping each other to grow and help each other to look to the Kingdom of God.

Wiza explained to me that his knowledge of the truth came to him through an interest he had in a girl. Although this made it difficult for him to be a part of the



During Linda Merrick’s visit, she was able to visit with some of the brethren in their homes. From left to right: Lena VanAusdle, Juliana Kachali, Esther Chilopora, Linda Merrick and Samuel Chilopora (sitting).

Church at first (because many thought he just wanted to run off and marry her), he stayed strong in the truth and proved his devotion to God. He soon felt the urgency to be baptized. He said: “I know God’s laws, what He did for me to be reconciled to Him. I noticed God wants to use me [to] serve in the Church so I saw it fit to get baptized and live in that newness of life where God can begin His work in me.”

He said that with Lewis and Lena’s help and counseling they helped him realize in-depth what it is to live a Christlike life. This also helped others see the potential in him, and to see that he was willing to serve and be a part of a spiritual family.

Lena adds how impressed she has been in the faithfulness of the members and how many of them have been a part of the Church for decades. They have sacrificed a lot to hold fast to God’s truth. This has had a huge impact on her.

Regardless of the hardships many live through in a developing country, it is so important to hold fast to God’s truth. To do so we need to build each other up and stay connected with the brethren who are part of God’s spiritual family, whether these people live next door to you or live on the other side of the earth. If you cannot visit Malawi or be in contact with the

people, you can pray for them.

About prayer, Lewis said this: “Pray for encouragement. Pray for growth, both physically and spiritually. Pray that they do not lose heart in doing what is right. Pray that God brings up strong and loving leaders from within the congregations here. Also, pray that people [can become] self sufficient, to be able to provide for the needs of their families independently so they can focus on more important things, like staying close to God.”

These are important aspects to pray for in your congregation as well. This is universal because, although we are very different in personalities, cultures, upbringings and ways of thinking, there is one thing we have in common. And that is the truth. We all have the same goal in this life.

Lastly, Wiza said this about what he wants others to know about him: “What I would like everyone to know about me is that I am human just like them, doing all I can to make it to the family of God and reign with Christ. This can only happen if they are able to see beyond the obvious and acknowledge I need them as a Church to grow and serve God. That’s the ultimate goal; the rest are secondary goals.” **UN**



Winter Family Weekend during the Friday night Bible study on Dec. 22, 2017.

Winter Family Weekend

Continued from page 1

Andy Lee gave the sermon, expanding on this year’s theme of “In the World, but Not of the World.” After sunset, participants looked forward to a full evening of activities, from a professional networking session for young adults, to a special room devoted to board games for the whole family to enjoy, to the teen and adult dances.

On Sunday morning, the anticipated basketball and volleyball games began, as well as games for preteens and activities for little children. That evening, Jelly and his friends had a special show for the

children. The rest of the night was full of music and singing as attendees viewed the performing arts expo, listened to the band showcase and sang karaoke.

Sports continued on Monday, as well as more seminars and activities for children. The popular family dance ended the night with a Wild West theme. For the first time, a live band performed some of the music for the evening, which added to the fun and excitement of the dance!

One last day of basketball and volleyball games ended the Winter Family Weekend on Tuesday, Dec. 26. We trust that everyone who attended this year’s event had a wonderful time, and we hope to see you there next year! **UN**



RICK SHABI
Treasurer and
Financial Services
Operation Manager

In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon wisely assesses, “To everything there is a season; a time for every purpose under heaven.”

As we approach the end of the calendar year, it is the time to consider finances. Tax reform was a major news item in December in the United States, as the president and Congress worked toward legislation to be instituted for calendar year 2018. Even without tax reform, individuals and businesses take the time to consider and review their financial status as “tax time” draws near.

In the Church it is no different, even though our fiscal year ends June 30. In August of each year, we engage an independent accounting firm to perform the annual audit of our financial statements and systems, but it is not until the December meeting of the Council of Elders that those audited statements are presented. In this issue of *United News*, the complete Audited Financial Statements (AFS) are made available. (You will find the AFS on pages 16-19).

Budgeting, accounting, preparation and review of periodic financial statements and AFS are all in keeping with the sev-

Be Diligent to Know the State of Your Flocks

eral financial principles found in the Bible. Speaking of keeping a good accounting of the resources God provides, Proverbs 27:3 states, “Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds.”

As we are now six months into the Church’s fiscal year, it might be useful to those who are interested to provide some highlights of our past and current fiscal year, which will assist you in your review of the AFS.

First, let me report that the Church’s financial condition continues to be very strong. We are thankful to God and to the members, donors, coworkers and others who faithfully support this work God has commissioned.

Here are a few items and statistics (with page reference number to the AFS, where applicable) that may be of interest to you:

• Unqualified Opinion:

On pages 1 and 2 of the AFS, the audit firm states its opinion that, based on their audit of the financial statements, systems, and internal controls, the financial statements “present fairly the financial position of [the Church] at June 30, 2017.” This is the most desired opinion an organization can receive.

• Cash and Restricted Fund Balances:

On page 3, the Statement of Financial Position, otherwise known as the “Balance Sheet,” discloses our asset and liability

balances at year-end. Our cash position is strong at year-end (and continues to be), but bear in mind that the cash balances presented on this page include restricted funds as well. Restricted fund balances are disclosed on page 11 of the AFS, in Note #8. As an example, the Video Recording Studio Restricted Fund balance at June 30 was about \$558,000. At Dec. 15, 2017, the balance in that fund was above \$730,000.

• Income:

The Statement of Activities, otherwise known as the “Income Statement,” provides an overview of income and expenses by category for the fiscal year. The Church’s overall “income,” which primarily consists of the tithes and offerings of members and others, increased slightly between the fiscal years. As of Nov. 30, 2017, five months into the new fiscal year, the Church’s income from general contributions is running 5 percent above prior year totals for the same time period.

• Donors and Coworkers:

Related to income, at June 30, the total number of donors and coworkers (that is, non-members who make unrestricted donations to the Church) exceeded 15,000 individuals and/or families.

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From The COUNCIL



by Dan Dowd

We are quickly approaching Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. God has us come before Him each year on His Holy Days, and every year we add to our understanding of His plan of salvation, of His love for mankind and gain a deeper appreciation of what to do better in our lives as His *Ekklesia* (“called-out ones”).

With Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, a big theme is of course overcoming sin—and in connection with considering the impact of sin in our lives, we are told in Scripture to examine ourselves. Self-examination is rarely a pleasant

The Story of Job and Self-Examination



Hiking alone will allow you to have a lot of self-examination without the distractions of the world. How do you go through your own self-examination this year as you go through your busy, daily lives?

endeavor. We know ourselves better than anyone else—the false pretenses, the white lies, the public posturing and so forth all wither under self-examination. We are left with the reality of who and what we really are. Most people never go through this type of examination because it can be crippling if there is no plan of action after the self-examination.

What Exactly Is Examination?

In 1 Corinthians 11:26-29 the apostle Paul discussed examining ourselves. In verse 28 the Greek word used for “examine” (*dokimazo* [dok-im-ad’-zo]) can mean to test, to approve or prove, to discern, to try. Too many look at this admo-

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Media and Communications Services Manager: Peter Eddington
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Copy Editor: Milan Bizic

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

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International addresses:

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

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 07 5580 8477 International calls: +617 5580 8477 E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

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

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

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

CAMEROON: United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322

Béssengue, Douala Cameroon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Fourteen Taps on the Shoulder



Photo by Leon Ephraim/Unsplash

However ugly and ungodly our lives have been, and continue to be, there's a way out through repentance.

by Mike Pischke

I was researching something called the repetition principle. In general, this principle is that if something is repeated often enough, it'll have an effect. Think of commercial jingles or slogans that are constantly repeated. These repetitions create patterns that our mind easily grasps, and in the case of advertising, the idea is that if your mind associates a jingle with a product, you'll be more likely to buy that product.

I don't know that I'm fully on board with that. I have a certain brand of car insurance, though I can more quickly and easily sing the jingles from other insurance companies. You would not want to hear me sing these jingles, but I could.

But repetition does have an effect on us.

When things are repeated in Scripture, are they more important than things that are just mentioned once? It could be unwise to take that perspective, because all of God's Word is important. But repetition in the Bible is God's way of saying: "Hey, people, I mentioned this before. Pay attention, and remember this." God taps us on the shoulder to remind us.

Who was the best king of Israel? Most accounts point to David as this king. In the book of Acts it says that David was a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). We are also told twice in Ezekiel that David will have a leadership role in the Kingdom (Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25). That's a pretty big deal.

But there's a measuring rod that the Bible

gives us to determine the best king of Israel. David is used as a standard of comparison when the legacies of five other good kings are defined. Solomon (1 Kings 3:3), Asa (1 Kings 15:11), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:3), Josiah (2 Kings 22:2) and Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:3-4) were all compared to David at the end of their reign.

Being compared to David was the Bible's measuring rod of a good king, and no other good king is used more often as the standard. By this yardstick, David was the best king of Israel.

This same measuring rod can be used to determine the worst king of Israel. There was one bad king who was used 14 times in the same way that David was used as a standard of comparison. This king was Jeroboam.

These 14 kings were Baasha (1 Kings 15:33-34), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18-19), Omri (1 Kings 16:25-26), Ahab (1 Kings 16:30-31), Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:51-52), Jehoram (2 Kings 3:1-3), Jehu (2 Kings 10:31), Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:1-2), Jehoash (2 Kings 13:10-11), Jeroboam, son of Joash (2 Kings 14:23-24), Zechariah (2 Kings 15:8-9), Menahem (2 Kings 15:17-18), Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:23-24) and Pekah (2 Kings 15:27-28).

That is quite a list. These 14 bad kings were all compared to Jeroboam when the legacies of these kings were defined. Sadly, the bad far outweigh the good. And as man has advanced in his ways, and not in God's ways, it may not even be that close in a study of today's modern rulers.

In addition to being compared to Jeroboam, 13 times in the examples cited for these kings, the phrase "who had made Israel sin" is repeated. Christ has a warning for those who lead children, or people in general for that matter, astray (Matthew 18:6-7).

Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was the first king of Israel after God tore apart the house of Solomon during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam. At this time Rehoboam remained king in Jerusalem over Judah and Benjamin. In 2 Chronicles 13, we also read that the tribe of Levi was under the rule of Rehoboam. And that makes perfect sense, in what we will uncover, because Jeroboam was making up his own rules when it came to defining holy days and priests. The Levites would not have taken the reign of Jeroboam in stride because of this. The other 10 tribes made Jeroboam their king.

So what made Jeroboam such a bad king? There are six verses in the Bible that do well to describe the man Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28-33). In reading of the evil of Jeroboam here, one can compile a pretty scary list of sins. He made idols and worshiped them. He made priests of his own choosing (including himself in 1 Kings 13:33). He established his own holy days. He put himself in the place of God. He lacked humility.

In looking at Jeroboam's sin of creating and worshiping idols, one may find this puzzling. A golden calf is such a memorable event of the children of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 32). Wouldn't Jeroboam have read about this or heard about this at some point in his life? Besides, this is such a clear infraction of the Second Commandment. So either he willfully proceeded making two golden calves, or one may come to the baffling conclusion that Jeroboam knew one golden calf was wrong, but perhaps two (he made two!) would be ok.

In 2 Kings 22:8, Hilkiah, the priest during Josiah's reign in Judah, finds the "Book of the Law" of Moses. It is unclear how long Scripture had been lost, and may have been lost prior to the reign of Jeroboam. So perhaps Jeroboam did not know the story of Aaron and the golden calf, or the Ten Commandments. But even if he did know the writings of Moses, Jeroboam seemed intent on following his own ways, and the ways of men. In 1 Kings 12:28 it reveals that he asked for advice—certainly he did not ask this of God or God's appointed priests or prophets.

Humility is an important character trait, pointed out by many verses in the Bible (1 Peter 5:6; Proverbs 22:4; Psalm 147:6). This is just three mentioned here, but I'm certain I'd be exhausted at the end of a search of verses addressing humility.

In those few verses from 1 Kings 12, we see Jeroboam violated the First, Second and Fourth Commandments. He did not put God first, he made idols and worshiped them, and he created his own Sabbaths. In addition, he was quite proud of himself. And it's not hard to imagine that he used the name of God casually, or without reverence, so let's just say he spit on the first four commandments, along with a host of biblical principles.

These sins were bad, but they were not the evil that God wants us to recognize and remember. Any one of these sins, or a combination of them all, is not why God chose to single out Jeroboam 14 times for us. The true evil of Jeroboam is identified in what comes next.

This shortcoming, this sin of Jeroboam, this attribute that God so effectively warns about, is in 1 Kings 13. A "man of God" visits Jeroboam, basically to tell Jeroboam of the awaiting doom for his behavior. As God wishes all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), He will extend opportunities—even to the wicked and wayward. Perhaps God extends opportunities especially to the wicked and wayward.

Far from responding to God's grace, Jeroboam points to the man of God, and says, "Arrest Him!"

It's not mentioned what awaited the man of God. I picture Jeroboam firing up a big vat of oil so he could throw the man into it. Telling a proud man that he's wrong doesn't generally go so well, and I think we all have our own examples of how ineffective it is. But telling a proud king that he is wrong is quite dangerous. Remember the king from the book of Esther? The law was that anyone who even went into the inner court to visit the king without being invited would be put to death. It's possible that in both of these cases—the man of God here and Esther—God's hedge of protection was raised.

We're told then that Jeroboam's hand withered. Distraught, Jeroboam asks the man of God to pray to "your" God—not Jeroboam's god or gods, but the man's God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The man of God does, and Jeroboam's hand was restored.

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Godly Love Versus Agape Love



Photo by Nadine Shaabana/Unsplash

Godly love far exceeds agape. The love God has for us goes much deeper than we can imagine. It implies a decision to love someone even when there is no expectation of a reciprocal response. It often is not a mutual, two-way love.

by Don Hooser

Love is a major theme throughout the Old and New Testaments. The two Great Commandments are about love—love for God and love for one another (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). God is love! (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore it's essential that we understand, teach and practice godly love in our thoughts, words and actions.

“Love” is a very general English word used in many ways. On the other hand, godly love is specific and spiritual, far superior to any other love. Because it is a special and profound subject, it's natural for us to want a simple, shorthand way of referring to it, a sort of code word that attempts to sum it up. And we naturally want to use a word that sounds pleasant and “spiritual.”

This partly explains the widespread popularity of the Greek word *agape*! This word is used in countless sermons and articles, including many in United Church of God. Some churches and other religious organizations also use the word as part of their titles.

Agape—pronounced *ah-gah'-pey* or *ah'-guy-pey*—is a nice-sounding Greek noun for love. The corresponding verb is *agapao* (pronounced *ah-gah-pah'-o*).

The Greek noun *agape* should not be confused with the English word *agape* (pronounced *uh-geyp*), meaning “with mouth wide open, as in surprise, wonder, or eagerness.”

The fact the Greek word *agape* has been adopted as a popular English word creates some confusion. An English dictionary

(Dictionary.com) defines *agape* as: 1. The love of God or Christ for humankind. 2. The love of Christians for other persons, corresponding to the love of God for humankind.

But those are *not* the definitions in the Greek language!

The purpose of this article is not to thoroughly explain godly love. If that were the purpose, it would address scriptures in the Old Testament almost as much as the New Testament. The purpose of this article is to clear up the misconceptions about the Greek noun *agape* as well as the Greek verb *agapao*.

Is Agape a Special and Spiritual Type of Love?

When we see the word “love” in the New Testament, it is most often the translation of *agape* or *agapao*. And since many of those scriptures are telling us how great is godly love, it is not surprising that we would assume that those Greek words refer to a superior kind of love, a spiritual godly love.

However, that assumption is not accurate. When the New Testament was being written, the Greek noun *agape* and verb *agapao* were the most common and general words for “love.” They were used in a wide variety of contexts just as our English word “love” is used in a variety of contexts. So when we say “*agape* love,” we are virtually saying “love love.” It's like saying “*amor* love” (Spanish), “*amour* love” (French) or “*amore* love” (Italian).

Godly love is a spiritual love that God through His Holy Spirit enables us to have (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; 1 John 4:7-13). Confusion arises because many people assume the same thing about *agape/agapao*. We will see from several scriptures that this assumption is not true.

Examples of Agapao by Carnal and Evil People

Luke 6:32—“For even sinners love [*agapao*] those who love [*agapao*] them.”

John 3:19—“Men loved [*agapao*] darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

John 12:43—“For they loved [*agapao*] the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

2 Timothy 4:10—“Demas has forsaken me, having loved [*agapao*] this present world.”

2 Peter 2:15—“They have forsaken the right way . . . following the way of Balaam . . . who loved [*agapao*] the wages of unrighteousness.”

1 John 2:15—“Do not love [*agapao*] the world or the things in the world.”

You see? The Greek words *agape* and *agapao* do not imply a spiritual or righteous love.

Let's Clearly Distinguish Between the English and Greek Words

The purpose of this article is not an effort to put a stop to mentioning *agape* in our messages. We can reduce the confusion by thinking of *agape* as both a Greek word and an English word (since it has been adopted into the English language). As a Greek word, it has no inference of anything spiritual. But when used as an English word, it is commonly viewed as a spiritual love. So no misrepresentation of the Bible is done when someone speaks of “*agape*” if he clarifies that he is using it as an English word for spiritual love and not stating or implying that *agape* and *agapao* mean spiritual love in the New Testament.

Other Greek Words Meaning Love

Two other Greek words are usually translated as “love” in the New Testament. *Philos* (noun) appears 29 times, and *phileo* (verb) appears 25 times. Many of our English words are based on the root Greek word *philo*, such as *philadelphia*, which means brotherly love.

However, *agape* appears 116 times and *agapao* appears 137 times in the New Testament, so we see how much more prevalent is this pair of words compared

to *philos* and *phileo*.

Two other Greek words that can be translated as “love” (*eros* and *storgos*) are not in the Bible.

Agape/agapao and *philos/phileo* have slightly different meanings. Some people think of *agape* and *agapao* as decisive love from the mind (head) while they think of *philos* and *phileo* as more spontaneous and emotional love from the heart, like affection. However, the New Testament frequently uses them synonymously and interchangeably, as we shall now see.

Synonymous Uses of Agapao and Phileo

“That disciple whom Jesus loved [*agapao*] . . .” (John 21:7, 20; 19:26).

“The other disciple, whom Jesus loved [*phileo*] . . .” (John 20:2).

“For whom the Lord loves [*agapao*], He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6).

“As many as I love [*phileo*], I rebuke and chasten” (Revelation 3:19).

“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love [*agapao*] the best seats” (Luke 11:43).

“Beware of the scribes, who . . . love [*phileo*] . . . the best seats” (Luke 20:46).

Here we see that *agapao* and *phileo* are used interchangeably! As Canadians would say, interesting, eh?

To understand the attitudes and actions of godly love requires far, far more revelation than knowing the definitions of a couple of Greek words and a couple of Hebrew words.

Phileo Used for Godly Love

When the New Testament speaks of godly love, it does not always use *agape* or *agapao*.

John 5:20—“For the Father loves [*phileo*] the Son.”

John 16:27—“For the Father Himself loves [*phileo*] you, because you have loved [*phileo*] Me.”

1 Corinthians 16:22—“If anyone does not love [*phileo*] the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.”

Titus 3:15—“Greet those who love [*phileo*] us in the faith.”

Thus we see that the Greek language does not make a major distinction between *agape/agapao* and *philos/phileo*.

Please see page 14

United Youth Camps: A Legacy Worth Passing Along

by Gary Smith

As the United Church of God was being formed in 1995, it was felt that providing a summer camp program for the youth of the Church was an important legacy that we wanted to preserve and pass along. Since the early days of our organization, United has provided summer camp opportunities in the United States and other areas around the world.

The goal of the camp program is not just to provide fun activities for the teens. While fun is part of the program, it is a lesser goal. It is hoped that through removing our teens from the world around them and focusing them on the Bible, our young people will embrace the true values we seek to impart and begin to apply them in their lives.

The camp program has been most successful in reaching the teens with the truth, but how has the process been accomplished? Through willing volunteers. Individuals from 19 years old through their 70s have given their time to help in the passing on our biblical legacy of God's truth.

While volunteers have contributed to the success of the camp program, we face a challenge as we go forward. Volunteers have been faithful in coming to camp year after year, and those repeat servants have been crucial in maintaining continuity in the camp program. So we always have a need for additional qualified staff to be a part of the camp program.

The question is, do we have the men and women available to continue our camp legacy? One of the greatest concerns in the Church today is the need for current and future leaders to carry on the camp program. The greatest resource we have for replacing our aging leaders is the youth of the Church.

We pray as Moses did before Israel crossed into the Promised Land in Num-

bers 27:15: "Then Moses said to the LORD, 'O LORD, you are the God who gives breath to all creatures. Please appoint a new man as leader for the community. Give them someone who will guide them wherever they go and will lead them into battle, so the community of the LORD will not be like sheep without a shepherd'" (New Living Translation).

As Moses had "groomed" Joshua for the job ahead of him, so it is our task to prepare future leaders for the Church and our camp program. All camps face the challenge of developing camp staff who can take over running the camp program.

As a camp director, I am most familiar with the situation at Camp Pinecrest. I'd like to share what we face in the future, not only at Pinecrest, but at the other UYC camps as well. Here are our needs at Camp Pinecrest:

Camp Director—As a camp director I am 66 years old. While I still enjoy camp, I am coming to the end of my camp career, and a new leader for Pinecrest will be needed to carry on the program.

Archery—Our archery department head and his wife have been doing a wonderful job since 2011. The program has been successful because the department head went to class, learned how to safely run an archery program and received certification. They would like to turn their job over to someone willing to run a safe and fun archery program.

Waterfront—Our waterfront staff has been shored up by a great couple of ladies since 2011. While they diligently oversee the teens in the water, they are desirous of turning the program over to the younger set. We would like to continue the swimming program at Pinecrest, and to do so we need lifeguards with swimming and lifeguarding certifications.

Riflery—Our shooting instructors have gone to school to learn how to

instruct and safely operate a gun range. We need individuals who know guns and are willing to go through the training and step into the leadership role.

Volleyball, Softball and Speedway—All of these activities require some knowledge of the game and enough youth and agility to teach the activity. Younger department heads are needed in these areas to keep these activities going.

Low Ropes—The low ropes program was developed through our instructor going to class in order to be certified and then work with Pinecrest camp in order to set up a ropes course. Our current department head has been doing the job for nearly 20 years. Someone is needed to literally learn the ropes to continue this program.

Rock Climbing and Rappelling—This activity requires someone with training and skill to teach an activity. Our instructor has had training and experience in how to safely run the program. Because of the danger involved, it is paramount to have a skilled instructor. Someone will be needed to take on this responsibility in the years ahead.

Counseling Coordinators—Counseling coordinators are needed who can oversee the counseling staff. We have been blessed with individuals willing to work with our camp counselors and help them in rightly working with the teens in each dorm. While we currently have people willing to help in this area, they will not be able to go on forever. They will need to be trained and willing replacements.

Counselors—Each camp needs younger people to take on this crucial camp responsibility. Truly, a successful summer camp has a dedicated group to serve in the most important job at camp. While the counselor role is one of the most challenging opportunities at camp, it is also the most rewarding job because of the impact that a counselor can have on those



in his or her dorm.

The needs of Camp Pinecrest reflect the needs at our other camps.

We invite you to check out the camps in your region to see what is needed. If you think you can fill one of the roles offered at camp, touch base with the specific camp director. Our hope is that you will be able to be a part of the UYC program.

Serving on staff at a UYC camp is one of the more rewarding experiences one can have in working with the youth in the Church. Staff members are usually exhausted when camp is over, but thankful they were able to be a part of a very special program.

What will be the outcome of your service at camp? You will grow as a leader of the Church and help in passing on the legacy of God's truth to future generations. **UN**

Update on New Studio

Continued from page 1

of the building. Above and beyond the cost of construction has already been an outlay of about \$35,500 for these design and architectural drawings, plus various permits.

Our members have been very generous, and the video recording studio fund now stands at just over \$700,000! Thank you! So, while the amount currently in that fund is getting close to what is needed for construction, it still is not sufficient.

We have also discussed with the Council the need for contributions to equip the new recording studio with the needed lighting, cameras, audio gear and other incidental equipment. While we plan as much as possible to use existing equip-

ment in the expanded studio, there is still the need for some updated equipment that keeps pace with new technology fitted to the new space. We calculate this to be about \$200,000.

With the generous contributions of members to the video recording studio fund, the Council at its December meeting has now approved the construction plans for the new studio, the increased budget beyond the initial estimate was approved, and they approved for me, as the president, to sign a contract with a builder. In the meantime, *we would like to encourage all of those who are able and are so inclined to donate to this project.*

When the new video recording studio is completed, it will serve the long-term needs of the work of the Church. It will provide better working conditions for our presenters and many of our support-

ing employees. But more importantly, it will provide the space and technical support needed by the media department to produce a higher quality product and that can facilitate a wider variety of video presentations in proclaiming the gospel and promoting the work of the Church. And we look forward to sharing with you artist concepts of how the new set will look when designs are completed.

It is our prayer that this project be fully funded with donations, but we have not yet reached that goal. *So we would like to encourage all of those who are able and are so inclined to donate to our Video Recording Studio fund—both for its construction and the needed equipment. Please indicate "Video Recording Studio" on your tax-deductible donation.*

Now is the moment for a strong biblical message of faith to go forth with

courage to a world in desperate need of God's message of hope and love. With your help, the Church of God will continue its mission of proclaiming the life-changing message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Again in Daniel 12, we read about the times in which we live and the times in which we preach the gospel: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1).

As you consider year-end tax-exempt contributions, please consider helping us to achieve our goal to preach this urgent message of salvation in a time of great world stress. You can easily make a tax-exempt online donation at http://donate.ucg.org/Video-Recording-Studio_p_31.html.

I thank you sincerely for your prayers and support. May God bless you! **UN**

Challenger West 2018: The Wilderness and Leadership Await!

by Matthew Fenchel

The Challenger West program returns in the summer of 2018, and we are looking forward to welcoming 14 young adults on another grand adventure. This wilderness immersion experience takes place in the Wind River mountain range near Dubois, Wyoming. Program activities include: seven-day backpacking trip in the Fitzpatrick Wilderness area, camping at 10,000-plus feet, rock climbing, rappelling, bouldering, fishing, orienteering, team building, group discussions and daily Bible studies. During our time in the outdoors we've seen big game such as moose, elk, bighorn sheep and (if we are lucky!) black bear.

This program is designed for young adults who want to strengthen their relationship with God, improve their physical fitness, and who strongly desire to develop qualities of leadership in an outdoor setting. Throughout the week, everyone will be challenged physically, mentally and spiritually to step out of their "comfort zones." An emphasis on group dynamics plays a major role in the program, with plenty of opportunities to give and receive feedback.

Each day will begin with an interactive Bible study that will focus on profiles of leadership from the Bible with time built in for private reflection and journaling. Participants will have the opportunity to be a group leader for one day during the program, and everyone will be asked to prepare (in advance) a 10-12 minute talk to be shared with the group. To help facilitate more profitable group discussions and



Deanna Hendrickson rock climbing at the 2016 Challenger West program.

greater personal growth there is a required reading component to this program.

Past participants have described the program in this way:

"It is now one of my favorite experiences of all time!"

"I expected to experience new activities that pushed my limits, build relationships and get outside my comfort zone. Challenger helped me accomplish these goals through positive encouragement during difficult times, and learning outside of my comfort zone."

"I really did grow so much closer to God. I was hoping I'd grow closer to the friendships I already had and make new ones as well, and the environment was conducive for that."

"Challenger West exceeded my expectations. I really liked how the activities were woven together with trail talks and time to spend having discussions with the

other participants. I also really enjoyed all of the activities and thought that the location was absolutely beautiful."

"I learnt a lot about leadership and how to interact with others depending on their personalities. I loved getting to know everyone on a deep spiritual level and helping people develop parts of their character that they feel are weakest."

The staff is excited to share this amazing experience with another group of young adults. Additional information about the program can be found at <http://uyc.ucg.org/camp/challenger-west>. Applications and information for 2018 will be available by mid-February. If you have questions, please contact the Challenger West director, Matthew Fenchel, at fenchelmc@fuse.net. Application deadline: April 15, 2018.

For more information contact Matthew Fenchel at fenchelmc@fuse.net. **UN**

news
AT A GLANCE

Updates From Ministerial and Member Services

On this past Feast of Trumpets, Sept. 21, 2017, three new elders were ordained into the ministry. Lomax Morris and his wife, Marcia Blair, serve in the New York City congregation. Tim Seelig and his wife, Terry, serve in the Austin, Texas, congregation. Rob Slocum and his wife, Tina, serve in the Portland, Oregon, congregation.

In September, Craig Scott was named pastor of the congregation in Jacksonville, North Carolina, which had been pastored by Tom Adams. Mr. Scott also pastored the Raleigh and Greensboro, North Carolina, congregations.

In October, Aaron Creech was named pastor of the congregations in Bethlehem, Lewistown, and York, Pennsylvania. Mr. Creech and his wife, Whitney, had moved to the area two years ago to be trained by pastor Lee Cole. Mr. Cole retired from employment at the end of December.

In October, Ben Light was named interim pastor of the congregations in Salem, Eugene, and Roseburg, Oregon, following the death of pastor John Cafourek. Mr. Light has served as an elder in the Salem congregation since April 2015, with his wife, Shannon.

In November, Ron Barker was named pastor of the congregation in Dayton, Ohio. Mr. Barker worked as an assistant pastor for the congregation with his wife, Janet, for the previous 12 months while assisting pastor Len Martin. Mr. Martin continues to serve as pastor for the congregations in Cambridge, Columbus, and Mansfield, Ohio.

In December, Stan Erickson was named pastor of the congregations in Coleman and Waco, Texas. Mr. Erickson and his wife, Judy, recently relocated to the Coleman congregation, which had been pastored by Clyde Hubbard. Mr. Erickson also pastored the Waco congregation, previously pastored by Rod Foster. Mr. Foster continues to pastor the Austin and San Antonio, Texas, congregations.

At the beginning of January, Paul Moody was named pastor of the congregations in Spokane, Kennewick, and Kettle Falls, Washington, and Lewiston, Idaho. Mr. Moody worked as an assistant pastor for the congregations with his wife, Darla, for the previous six years, assisting pastor Mark Mickelson. Mr. Mickelson retired from employment at the end of December.

Chris Rowland

Statement From the Council of Elders

Below is a personal correspondence letter that was approved by the Council of Elders.

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest and question on tattoos.

Tattooing is directly mentioned in the Bible. "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:28).

The original Hebrew words are "nathan qā'āqā" which as per the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia refer to "the procedure of making a mark or pattern on the skin by pricking it with a needle coated with pigment" (1988, Vol. 4, p. 739).

Many believe that this prohibition against tattoos in Leviticus 19:28 is only in the specific context of particular pagan practices—that the tattoos referred to are those that, like the cuttings, are for the dead (that is, as part of idolatrous mourning customs and attempts to induce the

gods to help the dead in the afterlife). However the prohibition against tattooing in Leviticus 19:28 can stand independently from "cuttings of the flesh for the dead" by the specific wording of the verse.

The Unger's Bible Dictionary supports the above by stating: "In Leviticus 19:28 we find two prohibitions of an unnatural disfigurement of the body: 'You shall not make any cutting in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you.' The latter (Heb. qā'āqā, 'incision') refers to tattooing, and has no reference to idolatrous usages, but was intended to inculcate upon the Israelites a proper reverence for God's creation" (1974, p. 696, emphasis ours).

"God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). The human body is God's crowning design in the entire physical realm. Any attempted unnatural marring of the body shows disrespect to God and lack of reverence to His creation. Paul adds, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own"

(1 Corinthians 6:19)? So we are to "glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

We are to reflect God's thinking and values, and strive to follow His instructions for us carefully and respectfully. "Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you'" (2 Corinthians 6:17). That is the context of Leviticus 19, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). A variety of actions which make one unholy are prohibited in this chapter, such as not revering one's parents, breaking the Sabbath, idolatry, stealing or dealing falsely, prostituting your daughter, false weights, and making marks or patterns on the skin by pricking it with a needle coated with pigment (tattooing).

God's clear intent with the above scriptures in mind is that our bodies should not be marked with tattoos.

If we can be of further help, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Personal Correspondence Department

Put It On Your Bucket List: The Museum of the Bible

by Peter Eddington

I visited the brand-new Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. just a week after it opened—and was very impressed with the quality of the exhibits and the size and grandeur of the museum. It encompasses seven large floors and is situated very close to the national mall memorials and Smithsonian museums.

The museum very tastefully represents the history of Scripture as canonized by the Jewish and Christian faiths. Numerous displays hold ancient manuscripts, Bibles, scrolls, fragments of the Word of God, and archaeological finds—some going back 3,000 years to the Canaanite Bronze Age I period.

Exhibits include several feature videos depicting the history of the Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible, the story of the New Testament, and the life of several biblical authors. These are very professionally done, and honor the words of God they convey.

There are numerous theatres and video displays that illustrate very nicely the stories and themes of the Bible. They are skillfully designed and produced. And several restaurants and eateries help you keep your energy up—since to see everything in the museum can take a 10-hour day or more!

What I Liked

Here are some of the positive highlights you can expect to encounter at the museum:

- The contribution of the Israel Antiquities Authority is a big plus for the museum. This allows for original artifacts from biblical times to be on display, some even from the time of ancient Israel in

the 11th century B.C.

- Original fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls prove the accuracy of Scripture as passed onto us today. Additional facsimiles and reproductions of many of the Qumran scroll pieces add to what can be studied and verified.
- Visitors are able walk through a recreated town of Nazareth depicting the time of the first century, along with a synagogue and live “rabbi” talk. The importance of the Sabbath was especially stressed, pointing out that Jesus, His disciples and the New Testament Church kept the seventh-day Sabbath. (It wasn’t until the fourth century that it was changed to the unbiblical worship day of Sunday.)
- The archeological and extra-biblical evidence for key characters from the Bible is on display—showing these people truly existed despite earlier claims made by skeptics. One of the best portions gives evidence of the life of King David and his early city.
- Visitors will be surprised to be reminded of how much music, even more recent music, is inspired by Scripture. And to follow, an exhibit shows how a large portion of our cinematic world has biblical themes. The Bible has had a big impact on our Western culture.

And It’s Free!

Entry to the museum is free! But donations are gratefully accepted. However, two or three special exhibits do have a cover charge to enter.

One such item is a motion ride (like you experience at theme parks) that takes the rider at high speed—with the ups and downs and twists of motion—on a tour of all the buildings, edifices and monuments of the nation’s capital where Scripture is quoted.

Afterwards, upon reflection, you know that there is no doubt from where the U.S.A.’s roots originate. At its core is the foundational belief in the Creator God! It’s emblazoned across the city—to the chagrin of many non-believers.

Put It on Your D.C. Bucket List

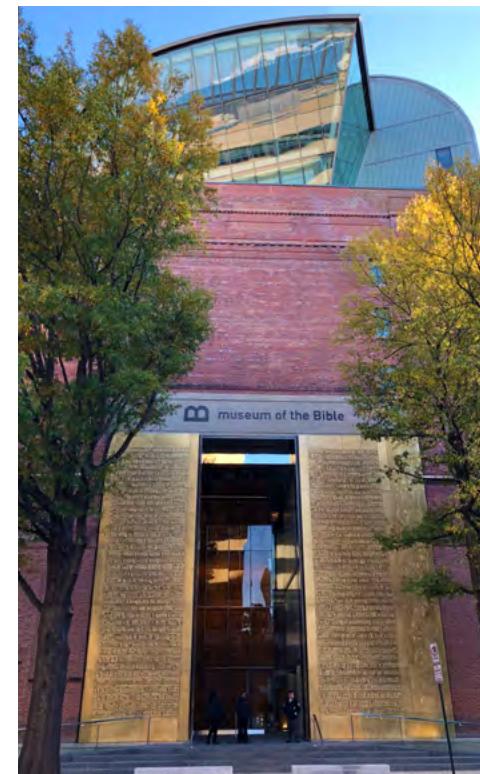
The museum does good service in melding science and the Bible. The two are compatible and not mutually exclusive. Much of science is shown to have gotten its roots from Scripture, and when properly compared they are in sync.

So, all in all, and despite the criticism given by some museum visitors and secular critics, I was pleasantly surprised and quite pleased with the quality of the museum.

It is certainly worth visiting—especially if you’re a respecter of the words of God. It is a very tasteful and honorable representation of Scripture.

The floor layout contains plenty of space for future additions, and is able to host special exhibits from other prestigious museums and institutions from around the world. It will be interesting to see new exhibits added as the years progress and as science and archaeology uncover more materials that verify the veracity of Scripture.

If you are ever in Washington D.C. I’d highly recommend a visit to the Museum of the Bible! **UN**



Top Photo: Museum of the Bible.

Bottom Photo: Philistine Bowl - Ashdod - Iron Age I - 12th-11th century B.C.

Photos by Peter Eddington

New Feast Site in France for 2018

by Tim Pebworth

We are pleased to announce that the VVF Village in Evian-les-Bains will host the 2018 Feast of Tabernacles in France.

Famous for its mineral water, Evian-les-Bains, on the shores of Lake Geneva, welcomes visitors with its lakeside promenade, Belle Époque architecture, fine dining and a focus on health and wellbeing with thermal spas and thalassotherapy treatments. Located across the road from the lakeside promenade, the VVF Village has a state-of-the-art conference center and auditorium with seating for 300 people, indoor heated swimming pool overlooking the lake, gym and a restaurant and bar with lake views.

During the Feast, we will offer excursions to nearby points of interest, including the French Alps and the city of Geneva.

In Evian-les-Bains, the Funicular Railway, Cachat Spring, Palais Lumiere and the main thermal bath spa are all about a 15-minute walk from the VVF Village.

The average daytime highs in late September are in the mid-60s Fahrenheit (18 Celsius) with lows around 50 (10 Celsius). As with prior years, the Feast in France will be all-inclusive and include nine nights lodging and breakfast, lunch and dinner. The price for two adults lodging together will be €620 per person and for a person lodging alone €740 per person. Children 15 and under pay a reduced rate.

Evian-les-Bains is approximately a one-hour drive from the Geneva Airport. We anticipate beginning to take applications on Feb. 15. We look forward to welcoming all those interested in joining the French brethren in Evian-les-Bains this year. **UN**



Photo by Samuel Zeller/Unsplash

Announcements



Nehemiah Cole Bingman

Sept. 22, 2017



Dustin Howie & Melissa Johnson

Engagement



Dudley & Louise Trone

65th Wedding Anniversary



Paul & Treva Markland

70th Wedding Anniversary

Births

Nehemiah Cole Bingman

Jesse and Rebecca Bingman, of the Cambridge, Ohio, congregation, are pleased to announce the birth of their second child, Nehemiah Cole Bingman, born Sept. 22, 2017, at 8:29 p.m. He weighed 8 lbs., 3.5 oz., and was 21 in. long. Mom, Dad and older sister Maggie are all excited at this newest addition to their family!

Paul and Treva who serve as a wonderful example to the congregation consider their marriage to be a blessing from God. Their advice to us is that in marriage, you have to be willing to forgive and forget—and always be loyal to each other.

We are blessed to have this couple as a part of our congregation.

Obituaries

Jared Stephen Biro

Jared Stephen Biro, 40, passed away Monday, Sept. 11, 2017, in Raleigh, North Carolina, surrounded by his parents and brother following a two-year battle with cancer. Jared was born Nov. 1, 1976, in Orange County, California, to Alex (Skip) and Joyce Biro. He was a graduate of North Carolina State University. He was also a workman's compensation specialist with the Cincinnati Insurance Companies. He loved his family, his dogs and, from a very early age, he loved any story with stars—especially Star Wars and Star Trek. He is survived by his parents, Skip and Joyce Biro of Knightdale, North Carolina, and brother Matthew Biro of Durham, North Carolina, as well as cousins, aunts and uncles in Raleigh, Boston and Florida.

During these past two years, Jared had rekindled his personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ that he had started as a child growing up in the Church. He returned to studying the Bible as well as other scriptural resources and was baptized in August of this year. While going through this massive trial lasting over two years, not only was he learning through his suffering, but those of us closest to him were also learning more about him.

We saw not only a physical strength fighting this disease so hard for so long right up to the end, but we also saw his character strengthen even beyond what he had before. As a testament to his strength of character and spiritual growth in a relatively short time, toward the end, even as his physical strength and life were dimming, Jared was thinking of others who were also sick and in need of prayer. Though he was near the end and



Jared Biro

Nov. 1, 1976-Sept. 11, 2017



Peggy J. Dudley

Aug. 30, 1932-Oct. 23, 2017

Engagements

Dustin Howie and Melissa Johnson

Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson, of the Orlando, Florida, congregation, would like to announce the engagement of their daughter, Melissa Lynn Johnson to Dustin Brandon Howie, son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Howie of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation. They were engaged during the Feast of Tabernacles in Italy. An August wedding is planned.

Anniversaries

Dudley and Louise Trone

Last May, longtime members Dudley and Louise Trone celebrated a milestone, their 65th wedding anniversary. They were honored at a luau-themed church social complete with Hawaiian cuisine and cake. Louise was a charter member of the Bakersfield, California, congregation and was baptized in 1958. Dudley was baptized in 1962 and was ordained an elder in 1969. They have four sons and daughters-in-law, 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. They attend and serve in the Sacramento, California, congregation.

Paul and Treva Markland

Paul and Treva Markland of the Dayton, Ohio, congregation recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

They met while working at a tomato cannery and were married on Nov. 27, 1947. Paul and Treva have three children: Peggy, Richard and Barbara. They have three grandsons and three great-grandsons.

could barely speak, Jared asked for them by name from his hospital bed.

He also sought forgiveness from some he thought he had offended. Though scared, sickened and weakened by the disease as well as by the treatment, he pushed on. Sometimes the best he could do was to put one foot in front of the other, but that's what he did—right to the end.

Why his prayers and his family's prayers, along with those of the church and his friends' these past two years were not answered for his physical healing, is a question we may not know until Jesus Christ returns and wipes away the tears we've all shed. But his family wishes to thank everyone for their prayers, cards, e-mails, calls and texts during his illness and following his death.

Peggy J. Dudley

Peggy Dudley was born on Aug. 30, 1932, in Norman, Oklahoma. She was also known as Jeri, a nickname she often used. She passed away on Oct. 23, 2017, from lung cancer at the age of 85 in McAlester, Oklahoma.

Peggy married Richard Dudley on May 4, 1950, in Ardmore, Oklahoma. They were married just shy of 54 years before his death on Jan. 3, 2007. They lived in several states over the years but spent a significant part of their life in Southern and then Northern California. She spent the last 11 years living with one of her daughters in McAlester, Oklahoma, and attended the Tulsa, Oklahoma, church.

After having listened to Herbert Armstrong on the radio on and off for several

years, thinking it was only a radio church with no physical church to attend, they found out in 1974 there was a church about an hour away and started attending in Reseda, California. Peggy was baptized into the Church of God on July 28, 1975, and her husband was as well shortly thereafter. She has been part of congregations in Santa Rosa, California; Roseburg, Oregon; Eureka, California; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Peggy is survived by her six children (four girls and two boys); seven living grandchildren (two of her grandchildren preceded her in death); 12 great-grandchildren; and one great-great grandchild.

Her daughter, Tabettha Vough, and son-in-law, Don Vough attend the Petaluma, California congregation. Her two sons, Earl Dudley and David Dudley, attend with the Eureka, California congregation.

She loved to garden, read, study the Bible and spend time with family. She was known for her encouraging letters to family and brethren. She always gave credit to God for the words she would write, and she was very excited to have a way to serve. She always prayed her letters would be received with the love intended. She was fervent in her prayer for family, brethren, and our world in general. Many have called her a prayer queen and a Christian encouragement campaigner.

Peggy would always make a point to introduce herself to anyone new that came to church and could strike up a conversation with anyone. She was easy-going, friendly and loving. She spent the last several years helping with the prison ministry by writing letters to inmates interested in

Announcements



Evelina Hogue

March 10, 1955-Nov. 19, 2017



Gail Lee Lindberg

Aug. 10, 1951-Nov. 20, 2017



Burk McNair

Dec. 31, 1931-Dec. 5, 2017



Juanita Elizabeth Richey

June 17, 1960-Sept. 28, 2017

the church, encouraging them and sending them sermon notes. She was known by many as Momma Peggy.

Due to health issues, Peggy had to stop attending church services a few years ago, which was extremely difficult for her. She really missed the weekly fellowship with others. She thoroughly enjoyed the telephone calls, cards and visits from brethren over the last few years and her family greatly appreciates the time others took to stay in contact with her and to keep her connected to the local church.

Evelina Hogue

Evelina Hogue, 62, of Wasola, Missouri, passed away Nov. 19 at her home, surrounded by loved ones. Evelina (Evy) was born on March 10, 1955, in Lawrence, Kansas, to longtime members of the Springfield, Missouri, church Royce and Evelyn Eslinger.

Evy was a runner. She has raced in numerous 5ks and 10ks, and has run the Bass Pro Half-Marathon several times. She received many medals, and they are proudly displayed in her home. Growing up, she enjoyed horse riding, and that continued into her adult years. She owned horses most of her life and passed that love to her children. She enjoyed going to rodeos and going on trail rides and was always ready to go when asked. The Fourth of July became one of her favorite holidays because it meant that she could combine two things she loved—family and camping.

God and family were of the utmost importance in Evy's life. They were her passion and filled her life with joy. She was a devoted Christian and made God the centerpiece of her life. Her faith in God carried her through the difficult times in her life, and she was always ready to pray for someone whether they thought they needed it or not. Her family was also the center of her life. She raised three children and fostered several children, two of whom she adopted, all as a single mother. She had a very large extended family, and Thanksgiving was another favorite time of year for her because it meant that everyone was able to come together.

Graveside funeral services were con-

ducted on Nov. 24 at the cemetery in Romance, Missouri, by her brother-in-law, Tony Wasilkoff, pastor of the churches in the Toronto, Ontario, area.

Gail Lee Lindberg

Gail Lee Lindberg was born on Aug. 10, 1951, in Hayward, California, to Elwood and Jean Harrell. She was a lifelong California resident who grew up in a loving family with her parents and two brothers, Scott and Brian. Gail met Phil Lindberg at Hayward High School, and shortly after graduation they were married. They were blessed with two children. As a young adult, Gail attended college and worked briefly before dedicating her life to being a homemaker.

Gail, along with her husband Phil, was called into God's Church in the 1970s and attended the Oakland congregation. She was a compassionate woman, who savored reading (especially the Bible), and who looked forward to attending church services whenever she was able. She loved the Church.

During the latter years of Gail's life she resided in a care facility and was appreciative of all the physical care she received. She died on Nov. 20, 2017, with funeral services following on Dec. 5. She is survived by Phil (her husband of 44 years), two children (Nina and Jonathan), and two brothers (Scott Harrell and Brian Harrell).

Burk McNair

Herbert Burk McNair, retired elder in United Church of God, died Dec. 5, 2017, in Denver, Colorado. He was born Dec. 31, 1931, in Camp, Arkansas, and was about to complete his 87th year of a full life.

Burk became interested in God's truth as a teenager listening to Herbert Armstrong on the radio with his brothers, Archie, Marion, Raymond and Carl. He applied to and was accepted to Ambassador College in 1950 to become one of the early pioneers of the college and the Radio Church of God. While in college Burk went on a baptizing tour with his brother-in-law Rod Meredith and entered the field ministry after graduation. His graduating class of seven included Paul Smith, Burk

McNair, George Meeker, Wayne Cole, Dean Blackwell, Charlene (Glover) Smith and Norman Smith. He married his wife, Ambassador student Billie Sue Sanders in 1954, who recently predeceased on Feb. 2, 2017, after 63 years of marriage.

The couple served in the ministry in various pastorate positions across the United States while in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). When doctrinal heresies entered the WCG in 1995, Burk and Billie Sue McNair joined United Church of God where they remained until their deaths. Burk served for six years on UCG's Council of Elders. The McNairs were known for their kindness and compassion to members and southern hospitality to all.

The McNairs served in pastoring for over 50 years until some health issues made it best to retire in 2002 where they lived in his wife's home state of Texas. They spent their remaining years there in San Antonio with limited service as his health allowed. His children recently moved him to Colorado to be under the care of his daughter the last few months before his death because of deteriorating health issues since his wife's death.

Memorial services were held Sunday, Dec. 10, in San Antonio, Texas, and conducted by their long-time San Antonio UCG pastor and *Beyond Today* presenter Gary Petty, who officiated at Billie Sue's funeral Feb. 2 in San Antonio last year.

Burk McNair is survived by his children, Kerry Burk McNair (Rhonda), Suzie Weaver (Mark C.), and Mark Edward McNair; grandchildren, Susan Kirkpatrick, Karen Clark, Cody Smith, Ashley Finsley, Mark Weaver, Brandon Weaver, Kerry J. McNair, and Hanna Juch; and 10 great-grandchildren. The obituary can be seen at <http://porterloring.tributes.com/obituary/read/Herbert-Burk-McNair-105564444>.

Juanita Elizabeth Richey

Juanita Elizabeth Richey was born normal on June 17, 1960.

All was well for over four years when a tragic auto accident with her mother in southern Tennessee occurred, leaving her with brain stem damage. She was uncon-

scious for 16 days and nights, and we were told she would be a vegetable when or if she awoke.

Her mother (having passed away in 2002), with bruised ribs, stayed with her in the main hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. However, Juanita did wake up, and she was not a vegetable. She had problems walking, but got along pretty well.

Over several years other physical problems arose, like Osteomyelitis when she was 17, resulting in wearing a leg brace after treatment left her right leg stunted.

In 2014, we found out she had a brain stem cyst, and she began having focal seizures, about 50 years after the accident.

In 2006 she developed cervical cancer, and the radiation, in my opinion and others, killed her left kidney and left her right one in very bad shape. She also needed a catheter.

Some natural remedies helped keep the bad kidney from going to dialysis. It was found she needed a stent placed between her bad kidney and bladder so it could drain properly. It needed to be changed every three to four months, going into the hospital each time as an outpatient. She also had some flare-ups and needed to be admitted from time to time.

She knew no stranger, and she made sure she got hugs from brethren and ministers in the Orlando UCG congregation. She was as an inspiration to all she met, somewhat of an artist, creating drawings and "I love you" cards. This year she was 57 years old going on 6 mentally. All this came to a halt in September this year. She was back in the hospital after all else failed, and then placed in hospice where she died on Sept. 28. She was buried on Oct. 2, 2017. This was the first time she missed keeping the Feast of Tabernacles since we started attending church in Worldwide.

She is missed by all who knew her. Till we meet again.

John W. Seifert

John W. Seifert, 62, of Bremen, Ohio, died suddenly Sunday, April 9, 2017. He was born July 9, 1954, in Lancaster, Ohio, the son of David Wesley and Dorothy (Moyer) Seifert.

John was the owner of Seifert Construction, established in 1979. He served



John W. Seifert

July 9, 1954-April 9, 2017



Mary Stuckey

Aug. 16, 1955-Oct. 27, 2017



Larry J. Wilson

Aug. 6, 1943-Dec. 4, 2017

Announcements: Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to 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.

as a deacon with his wife, Connie, in the Columbus, Ohio, United Church of God. John was a vital and vibrant part of the Columbus church. He directed the choir for many years in Columbus and at various Feast sites, and often provided special music with his beautiful singing voice.

He served the congregation in numerous, often untold ways with his contagious enthusiasm, his willingness to serve, his strong work ethic, his generosity and his love of God and God's people. He and Connie hosted the annual Labor Day teen campout for many years, which was always memorable and a highlight of the year for most of the teens from Columbus and surrounding areas. John was highly regarded in the church and in the community for his kindness. He was a friend to everyone. He never knew a stranger, and he is dearly missed by his family and friends.

John is survived by his mother, Dottie Seifert; his wife, Connie Seifert, whom he married May 23, 1976; three daughters, Amy (Rob) Richey, Beth Seifert and Jennifer (John Staser) Seifert; brother Mike Seifert; sister Deborah (Steven) Smith; six grandchildren: Jordan Richey, Jamison Bazell, Carson Bazell, Nicole Richey, Gabriel Remple and John Staser, Jr.; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father.

Mary Stuckey

Mary Stuckey, age 62, died Oct. 27, 2017, at her home in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Mary was born Aug. 16, 1955, to Richard

and Rosie Smith in Prattville, Arkansas. She grew up on a small farm in Prattville and was the third child out of five. She sang in a band with her sisters while growing up. While singing she met her future husband William Stuckey, who makes his living as a professional musician.

Mary liked to cook, garden, sew clothes and to window shop. She was a great support to her husband, who is blind. She worked for the Arkansas state government. Mary was baptized by Al Mischnick in 1989. She was a wonderful example for the brethren in the Little Rock congregation. She seldom missed services, and if she did it was because she was in a lot of pain or very nauseated from the chemotherapy that she undertook. No matter how badly she felt she would always say that God's will was what mattered.

Mary is survived by her husband William and her three children, Erreyon, Kevin and Joy. She is also survived by seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and her mother, who is in her 90s; as well as two sisters and two brothers.

Mary is no longer in pain and awaits the resurrection. She will be missed greatly, not only by her family, but by the Little Rock congregation.

Larry J. Wilson

Larry J. Wilson, 74, passed away peacefully at his residence on Dec. 4, 2017, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

Larry was born Aug. 6, 1943, in Parkersburg, West Virginia. After graduating

from high school in 1961, he went on to receive his certificate from DeVry University and began working at American Cyanamid in Willow Island, West Virginia, as an instrument mechanic. He retired from the company (which had been bought out by Cytec Industries) in 2001 after 35 years.

Larry began listening to Herbert W. Armstrong on the radio and receiving *The Plain Truth* magazine as a teenager in the 1960s.

In 1971, he began dating his future wife, Rita Hinzman, and introduced her

to Worldwide Church of God literature. They were married May 26, 1972, and both were baptized in March 1973 and began attending with the Worldwide Church of God congregation in Parkersburg, West Virginia.

In May 2017, Larry and Rita marked their 45th wedding anniversary.

Larry is survived by his wife, Rita, and his daughter, Angie, who both attend the Cambridge, Ohio, United Church of God congregation. He is also survived by one sister and several nephews and nieces.

Wild West Still Alive in Idaho



Photo by Darla Moody

Roundup Trio: Sherry Kenady and her sons Brad and Kurtis strike a playful pose at the Roundup.

Cowboys and cowgirls from around the territory gathered Saturday, Dec. 2, for a Wild West roundup hosted by the Lewiston, Idaho, cowpokes. The afternoon and evening were filled with sermonizin' and lots of socializin'.

Afternoon services were well attended, and all aspects of the service were conducted by guests from the Spokane, Washington, congregation.

A sermonette was given by Brett Wills, during which he reminded us that the choices we make dictate the life we will lead and that we should choose the way of life.

The sermon was given by elder Mike Iams, who encouraged us that, even though we live in a world where things aren't always fair, we should use all the experiences we have as a training ground for the Kingdom of God.

Following services, folks gathered around the chuckwagon and enjoyed

some delicious western themed grub, featuring plenty of soups, chili and cornbread. Dessert consisted of a playful array of cowboy hats, hay bales, cow pies, horse cupcakes, breads, brownies and candy.

There was plenty of horsin' around after sunset as cowpokes played their favorite games that included cards, Scrabble, Pass the Pigs, Headbanz, Apples to Apples, Banagrams, dominoes and others while listening to the sounds of western music in the background.

After everyone was duded up for the evening, Best Dressed Cowboy and Cowgirl awards were presented to Mike Iams and Tabitha Moody, respectively.

Guests enjoyed a true Wild West atmosphere of scenic tree-lined hills, old west main street, a watering hole, corral entrance, livestock and, of course, a covered wagon.

A good ole time was had by all.

Gina Jorgensen



Upcoming Events

Cincinnati Family Dance Weekend

Lights, camera, Hollywood! Come join the Cincinnati East congregation for our Old Hollywood Glamour Costume Dance Weekend! The weekend will be held Feb. 16-18. Our family dance weekend will begin with a Friday evening Bible study. We will then have combined Sabbath services at a beautiful venue followed by a delicious catered meal and a family costume dance (option to come as you are



with your Sabbath best). On Sunday we'll have a day of fun snow activities at Perfect North Slopes. Many more details please go here: <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/2018-cincinnati-family-dance-weekend>.



Orlando Teen One of Six to be Awarded Full Scholarship



Asia Lavender

Asia Lavender, daughter of Anthony and Joan Lavender of the Orlando congregation, was honored with a tremendous award—she was one of only six in the entire State of Florida who were the recipients of a Leaders For Life scholarship.

The scholarship is awarded to “highly motivated Take Stock in Children scholars who have demonstrated solid leadership skills, strong moral character, and academic success.” Asia’s scholarship provides full tuition, room and board, and other expenses to any Florida university of her choice, for four years.

Asia is active in many areas at school and in the local church. We all extend to Asia our heartiest congratulations. You can read the article that appeared in the local news regarding her award, reprinted by permission by the author, Carlos Medina.

Published in the Daily Commercial newspaper of Leesburg, Florida, on Dec. 14, 2017.

MINNEOLA—Asia Lavender wiped away tears while lauded during this week’s Lake County School Board meeting.

The 17-year-old senior at Lake Minneola High School has an impressive resume. She takes Advanced Placement classes, is dual-enrolled in college, is a member of the National Honor Society, volunteers at her church and in the community and on and on. It’s why she was a finalist for one of six statewide scholarships presented by the Leaders For Life fellowship program through Take Stock

in Children.

Asia was overcome by the tribute, which made the tears flow.

But Carman Cullen, executive director of the Educational Foundation of Lake County, was running a con on the teen, who thought she was being recognized for making the finals.

“What Asia does not know is her invitation to the school board tonight is a ruse,” Cullen said. “Asia, it’s a great honor to share with you that not only are you a finalist, but you are the first student in Lake County to be selected as a winner.”

The award, sponsored by the Asofsky Family Foundation, is nothing to sneeze at either. It covers most of Asia’s college cost including housing, transportation, books, computer, supplies and even food.

After a standing ovation, Asia stood bewildered in front of the podium facing the school board members.

“Hi,” she said quietly.

Stephanie Luke, school board chairwoman, came to the rescue.

“We are all super impressed with your accomplishments. We are very proud of you and know you will represent Lake County well,” Luke said.

But what about tuition? Asia took care of that a long time ago. She got a two-year scholarship from Take Stock in Children when she was in the eighth grade. They doubled that last year.

“She’s pretty remarkable. I don’t mean to brag, but she is pretty remarkable,” said Joan Lavender, Asia’s mother.

She said the scholarship takes away most of the concerns they had for Asia’s higher education.

“As a parent, you really don’t know how you’re going to make it happen. You really don’t want them to go into major debt,” she said.

Asia was also overjoyed by the award.

“It definitely changes my life. I thought maybe I’ll have to work. I didn’t know what I was going to do except keep pushing,” she said.

Asia, along with the five other recipients, will travel to Tallahassee in January where she will meet Gov. Rick Scott and attend ceremonies in recognition of the award. She hopes to study psychology and earn a doctorate in business.

Carlos E. Medina, reprinted by permission.

Passing the Baton

On Dec. 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.

Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard moved to the Coleman, Texas, church area from Buffalo, New York, in 1996. They first served the Coleman brethren as local elder and deaconess, and then in 2011, 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. They have agreed to take over as the new pastor and wife. Both Mr. and Mrs. Erickson have a long record of faithful service to God’s people.

Mark Welch, the area’s regional direc-



tor, 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.

The Coleman congregation of the United Church of God is truly blessed to have such seasoned leadership to counsel and serve its members.

Dixie Lewis

Middle Tennessee Congregations Bid Temporary Farewell to Fred Kellers

Not one to be kept idle even in retirement, former and longtime Nashville (and Murfreesboro and Jackson), Tennessee, pastor Fred Kellers bid America adieu, setting off for New Zealand in November. He will be serving there temporarily, helping out local pastor Daniel Porteous who is recovering from health issues.

The Nashville congregation hosted a going-away celebration for Mr. Kellers on his last Sabbath here, Nov. 4. The Kellers family moved to the Nashville area in 1987, and Mr. Kellers served as the pastor in these congregations (with

interruptions from serving in all of them simultaneously at various times) until his retirement in 2015. With so much history in the area—and with many of his children and grandchildren living here—he expressed that he’d miss everybody, but that he was happy to be able to serve where he could be of use to God’s purpose. Upon being asked to serve there, he remarked that his family encouraged him to go. It sounded like they wanted to get rid of him, he said, but it turns out “they just wanted an excuse to come visit me in New Zealand.”

Mitchell Moss

Marriage Presentation in Nashville

“A marriage tune-up” was how Kay and Randy Schreiber described the five-part presentation they gave in the Nashville congregation in December. The pair were in Music City for Mrs. Schreiber to attend a work conference, and they offered to stay over the weekend afterward to give the workshop on the Sabbath. The principles they shared were simple and intended for married people and singles alike as a review to bolster their present and future relationships with relational wisdom.

The day saw a short traditional service in the morning, a light potluck lunch and the workshop in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Schreiber focused on five areas that intersect to make up any relationship (commitment, sacrifice, love, nurturing and trust). Using interactive elements, humor, personal insight and even role playing to deliver pointers, they gave the audience time to write personal action items in provided notebooks to take home.

The Nashville and Murfreesboro congregations thank the Schreibers for taking the time and energy to prepare and present this seminar.

Mitchell Moss

Reflections of a Life

by Andy Diemer, Manny and Diane Purdo

Manny Purdo is a member of our UCG congregation in Saratoga Springs, New York. He and his wife Diane are longtime, faithful members of God's Church. Unlike most of us who were born in a free country enjoying many God-given blessings, Manny came from a background of persecution and war. Here is just a glimpse of his life's story.

"Sometimes as I reflect on my life of 82 years, it can be like looking through binoculars the wrong way. Some visions of my past look so far away. But, like turning the binoculars around to the right direction, some remain quite vivid still.

"I was born in 1935 in northern Iraq, close to Turkey in the shadow of Mt. Ararat, entering life between two world wars. For a Christian family living in an Islamic world, it was fertile ground for danger. The massacres that occurred during WWI against my people remained fresh in the memory of my parent's generation. That genocide has been admitted and documented. My grandfather was dispossessed of his property and killed along with many others. We became a people without a country, always on guard for the next strike. My dilemma: How can I explain such horrors to church brethren living in America who have always known freedom?

"Persecution was a daily occurrence for most, and we experienced our share. It went beyond name calling and deprivation. I can still recall the feeling of rocks hitting my back as I walked down the street and the fear of being dragged down an alley by the enemy and killed. Thankfully, the British Royal Air Force (RAF)

was looking for men from the local population to augment their ranks. My father was among those chosen, enabling us to move onto the air base at Habbaniyah in Iraq's Anbar province. Although far from ideal, we were safe from the immediate reach of the Islamic population. We lived in our own community on base and knew a certain semblance of normalcy as we attended school, participated in sports and Boy Scouts. On occasion, the family was able to visit relatives at a summer camp, high up on Mt. Ararat, giving us a reprieve, for a short time, from the daily concerns of the war. Many of our people were shepherders and had found safety in the remote mountain areas.

"With our fathers away at war, boys in the family were expected to begin working at an early age to help support the family. My brother, Aprim, was working four hours a day for a loaf of bread, and at the age of 12 I tried to find work to help. After much discouragement, I was hired as a messenger for Corporal Helps of the RAF. In my struggle to fill a man's shoes there were many challenges. Each paycheck, whether large or small, was turned over to our mother with no question or expectation of spending money. The excitement a youth might experience in earning that first paycheck and the fantasies of what to spend it on did not exist.

"As the war ended, we were returned to life in the general population of Iraq; the air base closed, and our respite ended. It did not take long for our tormentors to find us. Fortunately, after many long months of trying, I was able to land a job in Kirkuk at an oil production station to



Manny and Diane Purdo

train as a medical assistant to the doctor. I cared for employees injured on the job and for many people in the local population. The education in this field provided the means for me to come to America in 1956 as a student with ambitions of becoming a doctor.

"With my family back in Iraq, my dreams of a career in medicine were short-lived. While attending college, I worked to provide my basic needs and sent what I could back to my family in Iraq for their survival. I worked two full-time jobs in the summer and one when I was attending school, which soon proved to be too expensive for me to continue. By a twist of fate or necessity, I found myself in the restaurant business starting as a food service waiter. Through hard work and determination, I worked my way through promotions until I was managing the food and beverage operation for hotels and air-

ports for many years. I eventually owned my own cafe before retirement. There are many more stories between these lines that space does not permit telling here.

"The greatest blessing in my life has been my calling into God's Church in 1974. Now I see how God used my life's experiences, even the ones that seem so far away, to prepare me for this calling. Learning to live God's way while looking forward to the amazing future that lies ahead for us privileged to be called is a blessing beyond imagination. The Potter shapes and molds each of us throughout our lives to His purpose. Our future is assured if we keep on the path to His Kingdom. As I study, pray and rely on God's promises, the focus through those binoculars is becoming sharper. Now, as I reach my later years and reflect, the purpose for my life is ever clearer, like looking through the binoculars in the right direction." **UN**

The Feast—Over in the Blink of an Eye

by Karen Edelbach

The Feast takes a lot of preparation and planning, both by the Church and each individual who attends. And then before you know it, the time has come to return to our homes and back to the world we left behind. It's always the same—it goes by very quickly!

How does one capture the significant aspects of the Feast, including the people we fellowship with and the sermons we hear? I ask myself this every year. How can I keep it all from slipping away and out of my mind once other things come crowding in, for instance our daily responsibilities just to keep up with our everyday lives.

For one thing, you have to realize you can't hold on to it all. You are in the moment at the Feast, and our minds are limited. It is hard to hold on to what is significant.

One of the sermons in Oceanside was

a description of how God meant it to be this way—the hustle and bustle of getting to and participating in the Feast. Then it is quickly over.

First, contemplate what most impacted your own life. Remember the people who tell you of a trial or health problem. Write it down and pray for them when you get home.

Did a sermon hit you square between the eyes, a weakness you realize you need to work on? Maybe there is quality you want to strengthen in your life to grow in God's character?

Review your notes, and read the scriptures. One thing I try to do is to write out a brief "nugget" from each message. Think of God planting little seeds in your brain during the Feast that can grow and take root throughout the year, and blossom into fruit to please Him.

We come to be trained to become "trainers" for the world tomorrow, and then we



The children's choir at the 2017 Feast in Oceanside, California. How do you keep the memories from your Feast from slipping away throughout the year?

return home. Yes, it's over quickly. But we can then continue in our preparations for the future God has for us through our Bible study, prayers and continuing to live God's way on a daily basis. We do this by following in Christ's footsteps.

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7). **UN**



Upcoming Events

Southeast Regional Formal

The Nashville and Murfreesboro congregations cordially invite all teens and young adults to the United Church of God Southeast Regional Formal!

This year's event will be held at the Baird Chapel of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, on Saturday, March 24, 2018, with senior presentations at 6:00 p.m., a catered dinner starting at 6:30 p.m., and dance from 7:30 p.m. to midnight.

Registration:

The deadline to register is March 9, 2018. The fee is \$25 per person, which includes the catered dinner and dance with snacks and drinks.

We will not be able to accept payment at door. All attendees must pay by the deadline!

Be sure to mail your registration form with your check. This form is made available through the Facebook group under the files tab.

Please mail your registration form and payment to Ronnee Ellithorpe, 100

Meadow Brook Lane, White House, TN 37188. Checks can be made out to UCG-Tennessee.

For questions about registration, please e-mail UCGsoutheastprom@gmail.com or call/text Ronnee Ellithorpe at (615) 498-2251.

Sabbath Services:

Sabbath services will be held at Cumberland University in the Baird Chapel (same location as the dinner and dance) at 2:30 p.m.

If you are interested in performing special music at services, please contact UCGsoutheastprom@gmail.com or Ronnee Ellithorpe at (615) 498-2251.

Senior Bios:

To all 2018 seniors: Please submit this year's Senior Bio form along with your registration form. All of the seniors and their accomplishments will be recognized at the formal. The Senior Bio form is made available through the Facebook group under the files tab.

Photos:

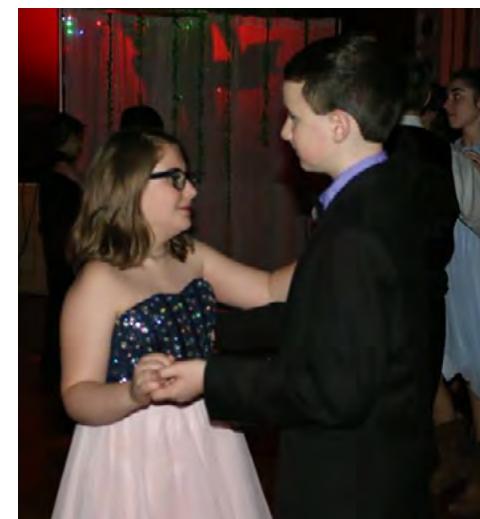
We will have opportunities for photos to be taken at the formal free of charge! All photos will be uploaded to the UCG Southeast Regional Formal Facebook group following the event.

Directions:

The address for Baird Chapel at Cumberland University is 1 Cumberland Square, Lebanon, TN 37087.

From Nashville: Take I-40 East to exit 238, South Cumberland Street. Turn north and continue for 1.3 miles. Turn left onto Leeville Pike and continue for 0.3 mile. Take second right on to South Greenwood Street and continue for 0.2 mile. Turn left onto McClain Avenue. Campus is on right.

From Knoxville: Take I-40 West to exit 238, South Cumberland Street. Turn North and continue for 1.3 miles. Turn left onto Leeville Pike and continue for 0.3 mile. Take second right onto South Greenwood Street and continue for 0.2 mile. Turn left onto McClain Avenue.



Campus is on right.

From Chattanooga: Take I-24 West to I-840 East (Lebanon, Knoxville). Continue on I-840 East until it meets I-40. Take I-40 East to exit 238, South Cumberland Street. Turn north and continue for 1.3 miles. Turn left onto Leeville Pike and continue for 0.3 mile. Take second right on to South Greenwood Street and continue for 0.2 mile. Turn left onto McClain Avenue. Campus is on the right.

Godly Love Versus Agape Love

Continued from page 5

However, Something Significant About Agape/Agapao

Agape/agapao has a shade of meaning which is significant: It implies a decision to love even when there is no expectation of a reciprocal response. It often is not a mutual, two-way love.

To illustrate, God loved all people (who were generally unlovable!) before anyone loved Him in return, and when there was no guarantee that anyone would love Him in *the future* (John 3:16-17). Consider Romans 5:6-8: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love [*agape*] toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Let's Not Forget the Old Testament

Love is taught throughout the Old Testament as well. Many New Testament scriptures about love are quotes from the Old Testament. The Hebrew language expresses love very well. "Love" in the Old Testament is most often the translation of *ahab* (pronounced *aw-hab*), which appears 250 times in varied forms, the verb far more frequently than the noun.

Consider the two Great Commandments. "You shall love [*ahab*] the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "You shall . . . love [*ahab*] your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

Also be aware of *hesed* (or *chesed*, pronounced *kheh'-sed*), a profound and inspiring Hebrew word with various shades of meanings. It is in the Old Testament 248 times. It indicates steadfast and compassionate love and mercy. Some of the translations are *mercy*, *lovingkindness* and *goodness*.

Hesed most often is referring to the love of God toward His people. Plus, *hesed* is often the key word in important passages about God's love for *all* people, including Psalm 36:5, 7, 10 and Psalm 103:8, 11, 17.

Godly Love Far Exceeds Agape!

To understand the attitudes and actions of godly love requires far, far more revelation than knowing the definitions of a couple of Greek words and a couple of Hebrew words. We need the entire Bible, God's book of love!

1 Corinthians 13 is the "love chapter," the chapter that most succinctly sums up godly love. This one chapter reveals far more than any definition of *agape/agapao*. To imply that we can sum up God's love with one word or a few words is an insult to God and His love.

It's unfortunate that some have tried to separate godly love from obedience to God's Ten Commandments. A major way that we express our love for and loyalty to God is by obeying His Commandments (1 John 2:4-6; 5:2-3; 2 John 6). This heresy is reinforced by modern society's portrayal of love as emotional *feelings*, while the Bible portrays love primarily as one's *actions*—the labor of love in how we treat God and other people. The Greek words *agape/*

agapao do not imply anything about obeying God, which further demonstrates that they do not represent godly love.

A "New Commandment"—the Sign of a Disciple!

John, the "apostle of love," preserved for us Jesus' critically important statements about love.

Jesus said, "I'm giving you a new commandment: Love each other in the same way that I have loved you" (John 13:34, God's Word). The Old Testament teaches love, so how could a commandment to love be "new"? Jesus taught and demonstrated a much higher level of love than the world had ever known! It was a completely unselfish, unreserved, self-sacrificing love.

Jesus went on to say, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). This is the sign that is unique and most convincing—the Christ-like love that God's people have for each other.

Godly love is selfless and sacrificial. Jesus said: "This is My commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13, New Living Translation). See 1 John 3:16-18.

The apostle Paul also taught humble sacrificial love: "Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves" (Philippians 2:3-4, Contemporary English Version).

The apostle Peter also emphasized a special deep love for fellow disciples: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the

truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren [*philadelphia*], love [*agapao*] one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

Godly love is amazing! It does not seek retaliation (Matthew 5:38-39) It is willing to go beyond one's duty in serving others (verses 40-42). It even means loving one's enemies! (verses 43-48). The perfect example of these virtues was the earthly life of Jesus Christ!

Some Conclusions

Let's be very careful about the words we use. If we speak of *agape* as a spiritual love, it would be good to clarify that we are using it as a popular English word and not as a Greek word.

As humans, we can never fully comprehend God's love, although it is our duty and joy to strive to understand it better and better. It is our duty and joy to increasingly internalize that same love and exercise it toward God and toward one another.

Perhaps the Bible's greatest tribute to God's profound and awesome love is in Ephesians 3:16-19. The New Living Translation words it this way: "I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." **UN**

The Story of Job

Continued from page 3

dition as a once-a-year personal spiritual inventory.

The definition of “examine” shows us there is much to consider in examining ourselves, but we must be sure to keep the right balance. “Examine” can also mean “to test . . . in order to determine progress.” One of the big things we can miss in our spiritual examination is that God does not want us to become overwhelmed by the sin we see, but instead to realize what we need to change in order to make progress.

Job’s Trial of Examination

The book of Job is an interesting book on many levels, perhaps primarily because of the self-examination Job goes through. No other book God has preserved for us has such a detailed recounting of one man’s thoughts and conversations as God works with him.

At the start of the book, Job’s life is good—he serves God, he is blessed with physical wealth, he has healthy children who enjoy each other’s company, and much more. Unbeknownst to Job, God and Satan have an ongoing conversation about Job. We know from Scripture that even though Satan is constrained by God, he is currently allowed to rule over the earth (Ephesians 2:2, 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan, however, is an adversarial ruler (2 Peter 5:8)—he rules to hurt us not help us. God is simply asking if Satan, in his adversarial role, was considering Job. Why would God draw such attention to Job? A simple summary of the book of Job is that God was using Satan to help Job in his self-examination. Job’s story is a wonderful reminder to read prior to Passover.

Satan had considered Job, but Satan knew that God had given protection to

Christ was telling His disciples, and by extension us, that because He overcame so could we.

Job. Satan then went on to challenge God to take that protection away from Job, saying that Job would then curse God. Our self-examination is important to be able to more completely take on the mind of Christ and to continue to overcome sin. While this is our responsibility, God will help us with it if we do our part.

God let Satan lead Job through a series of trials—each worse than the previous—to show Satan that he didn’t really know Job at all. God had confidence in Job, but He also used Satan to help make Job understand and obey God on a much deeper level (Job 1:8). Job was being sifted. Job was being refined. God was setting Job off on an intense exercise of self-examination. When we face situations similar to what Job went through, we need to remember not to “despise the chastening of the LORD” (Proverbs 3:11-12).

What we can often miss in the midst of a trial, is that God is looking for us to succeed (rather than looking for us to fail) because, from His perspective, as long as we are in the “fight” we have already become part of His family (Romans 4:17b). We learn to trust and obey God through the trials we face (Hebrews 5:8).

Examination From Others

Much of the book of Job recounts the advice and examination Job was receiving from his supposed friends—supposed friends because they hurt Job more than they helped him. While they were correct in some areas, they assumed sinful actions by Job and they presumed to speak for God way too much. They even seemed

delighted in some of Job’s suffering. While it is hard to hear correction from others, it is extremely important to consider if there is anything of value in what they say. Even if our friends are wrong, oftentimes there is still an element of truth or a point of growth that we can use to become a better son or daughter of God. God is looking for a return on the “investment” of His Holy Spirit (Isaiah 55:6-11), and in order for us to determine if we are being a profitable servant, we must examine what has been accomplished in us.

Self-examination is seldom pleasant or comfortable—but it is a necessary part of our calling so God can bless our latter days.

Overcoming Is Part of Examining

In John 16:33 Christ said that He overcame the world. How would Christ have known He overcame unless He examined Himself? He was telling His disciples, and by extension us, that because He overcame so could we.

Examining ourselves can also mean examining how we function within the bigger body. Are we serving others, are we supporting others, are we hurting others, are we a benefit to the spiritual body? Examination involves an element of listening. God allowed Job to be sifted by Satan so that he would grow in the grace and knowledge of God and have a deeper understanding and application of God’s ways. Even though we can be blind to our shortcomings—just as Job was initially—God seeks to lead us out of that blindness, never forsaking us (Isaiah 42:16). Like Job, God will not allow a trial to be more than we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). God is leading each and every one of us through this refining process to produce something more precious than gold.

However ugly and ungodly our lives have been, and continue to be, there’s a way out. There is everlasting life, and a joy and peace that we are just not able to comprehend as humans [yet].

house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.”

So here is the great sin of Jeroboam: He did not repent. He did not repent.

However ugly and ungodly our lives have been, and continue to be, there’s a way out. There is everlasting life, and a joy and peace that we are just not able to comprehend as humans. Our imagination of the new heaven and new earth does not qualify in any way to give us a proper insight of what awaits.

But it all hinges on repentance.

It is very easy to contrast David’s life

We must be careful not to think that God wants us to examine ourselves so He can punish us. God is faithful to forgive our sins when we repent (1 John 1:9). After God forgives our sin, He separates Himself, and us, as far from that sin as is possible (Psalm 103:12).

It is worth asking a few questions in considering self-examination:

- How did we grow this past year? Perhaps you had a number of trials you struggled through, but if we consider that trials are for our edification, then we need to make sure we learned the right lesson(s). Are we a better son or daughter of God now compared to a year ago? Do we have more understanding of His law, His plan of salvation and our role in His coming Kingdom?

- How did God bless us spiritually this past year? Where have we seen God’s hand in our life?

- What do we see more clearly now that God wants us address in the coming year? Could we stand before Christ today and say we have done everything in our power to prepare to be a son or daughter in His Kingdom? If not, what should we be doing?

After Job’s friends were done telling Job all that he had done wrong, Job defended himself. At the end of that book, when Job was done defending himself, God steps into the conversation, and Job comes to some hard realizations. Job finally saw what God wanted him to see and said, “*Now my eye sees You*” (Job 42:5-6). Because Job examined himself, God blessed Job’s latter days.

Self-examination is seldom pleasant or comfortable—but it is a necessary part of our calling so God can bless our latter days. As we approach Passover, and indeed as we rehearse God’s plan of salvation anew in the coming year, let us remember to examine ourselves so we can be useful to God in His Kingdom. **UN**

with the ways of Jeroboam. David did not fashion idols, or put himself in place of God. David was an example of humility for us all. He listened to the prophets and repented profusely. It is abundantly clear what made David a good king and Jeroboam a bad king. And it is equally clear why these two kings became standards of their kind.

Jeroboam sinned, David sinned, and we all sin. But the legacies of 14 bad kings include a comparison to Jeroboam for the purpose of pointing out the treachery of an inability or unwillingness to repent.

One day our own legacies will be written down. If they include an absence of repentance, they will likely end with the statement, “And we did evil in the sight of the Lord, just as Jeroboam did.” God wants us to remember this. So He effectively reminds us of the importance of repentance, with these 14 taps on the shoulder. **UN**

Fourteen Taps

Continued from page 4

Now, we believe in miracles. But when a healing happens to someone else, it’s not always certain that there was divine intervention. It could be time and chance, or some other reason or factor to explain it. But when a healing happens to us personally, we know more clearly that God chose to intervene. We all have personal examples of when we know we’ve had God’s hand of mercy or protection on us.

My dad had something wrong with his shoulder for years. I was involved with a wallpaper-hanging project or two at their house because he could not lift his right arm above his head without some extreme discomfort. I hung enough wallpaper to actually get pretty good at doing it, but let’s be clear: I’m not offering up any wallpaper hanging services.

My dad was among a group of people who were praying for him, and he lifted his right arm, and felt a pop. He lifted it again, and he felt another pop. After that, he was completely healed. While I can suggest alternatives, try telling my dad that a miracle did not take place there. You won’t have much success suggesting otherwise.

So you would think that this would have registered to Jeroboam. Two miracles, back-to-back—first, the hand was withered, and then the hand was restored. Wouldn’t the God of Israel have stood out as the God, the One to worship and follow? Well, we read of Jeroboam’s reaction:

1 Kings 13:33-34: “After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing was the sin of the

Be Diligent to Know the State of Your Flocks

Continued from page 3

• Expenses:

While the Income Statement shows overall expenses, if you are interested in more detail on how money was spent, please review the Schedule of Functional Expenses that are presented on pages 12 and 13.

• Assistance to the Needy (third tithe assistance):

On the Schedule of Functional Expense you will note that, in fiscal 2017, the Church provided over \$1,000,000 in “assistance to the needy.” A separate accounting of the Assistance Fund is maintained in our accounting records for those who choose to donate funds to be used for this purpose. (A separate accounting fund is also maintained for Feast of Tabernacles and other specific donations. For a listing of the various funds we maintain, click on the “Donate” button at the top left of www.ucg.org).

Personally, it is a privilege and blessing to be able to serve God, the Church, the Council of Elders and you in the area of financial accounting, oversight and stewardship. God has richly blessed His Church, and all of us take seriously the responsibilities He has given us.

As you review the AFS, or if you have any questions about the finances of the Church, please feel free to contact me at any time. **UN**

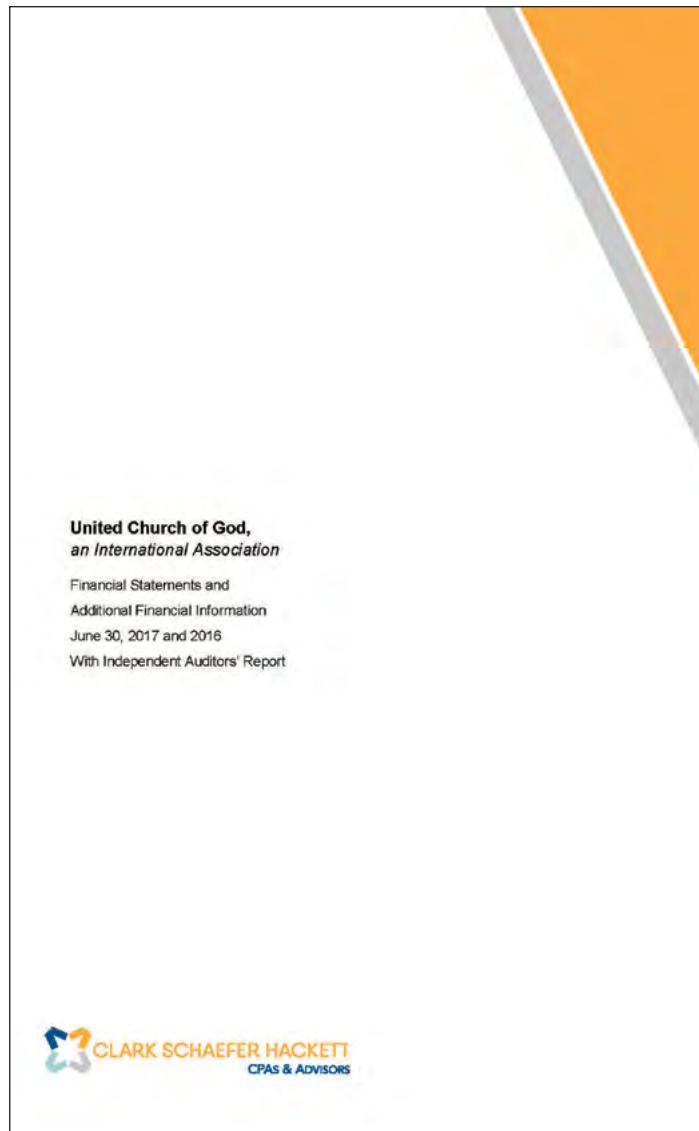


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One East Fourth Street, Suite 1200, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
P. 513.241.3111 | F. 513.241.1212 | cshco.com

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

Council of Elders
United Church of God, *an International Association*:

Report on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of United Church of God, *an International Association* (a not-for-profit organization), which comprise the statements of financial position as of June 30, 2017 and 2016, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

RESULTS THROUGH REMARKABLE RELATIONSHIPS

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of United Church of God, *an International Association*, as of June 30, 2017 and 2016, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Other Matter

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The schedules of functional expenses on pages 12 and 13 are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the schedules of functional expenses are fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

Clark, Schaefer, Hackett & Co.

Cincinnati, Ohio
November 15, 2017

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*
Statements of Financial Position
June 30, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 7,305,864	5,330,131
Certificates of deposit	1,013,987	2,005,645
Prepaid expenses	324,945	285,362
Property and equipment, net	<u>3,943,282</u>	<u>3,879,385</u>
Total assets	\$ <u>12,588,078</u>	<u>11,500,523</u>
Liabilities and net assets:		
Liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 117,819	163,071
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	507,785	478,286
Accrued insurance obligations	314,675	156,966
Accrued other	35,230	8,675
Mortgages payable	<u>383,500</u>	<u>439,055</u>
Total liabilities	<u>1,359,009</u>	<u>1,246,053</u>
Net assets:		
Unrestricted	10,601,669	10,144,728
Temporarily restricted	<u>627,400</u>	<u>109,742</u>
Total net assets	<u>11,229,069</u>	<u>10,254,470</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ <u>12,588,078</u>	<u>11,500,523</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
3

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*
Statements of Activities
Years Ended June 30, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
Unrestricted net assets:		
Revenues, gains and other support:		
Contributions - individuals	\$ 12,350,743	12,440,256
Contributions - local congregations	464,115	455,030
Holy day offerings and festival fund contributions	4,959,132	4,824,556
Estate and personal property donations	110,289	45,931
Dividend and interest income	45,453	31,191
Other income	141,556	155,607
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	<u>92,717</u>	<u>79,664</u>
Total revenues, gains and other support	<u>18,164,005</u>	<u>18,032,235</u>
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Field Ministry / Local Congregations	7,719,370	7,576,279
Festivals	379,160	391,881
International	1,558,152	1,525,870
Public Proclamation	<u>4,892,300</u>	<u>5,318,026</u>
Total program services	<u>14,548,982</u>	<u>14,812,056</u>
Management and general:		
Council of Elders / Home Office / Insurance & Benefit Plans	3,054,189	2,895,212
General Conference	34,797	30,166
Executive Reserve	<u>69,096</u>	<u>167,711</u>
Total management and general	<u>3,158,082</u>	<u>3,093,089</u>
Total expenses	<u>17,707,064</u>	<u>17,905,145</u>
Increase in unrestricted net assets	<u>456,941</u>	<u>127,090</u>
Temporarily restricted net assets:		
Contributions	610,375	84,162
Net assets released from restrictions:		
Satisfaction of restrictions	<u>(92,717)</u>	<u>(79,664)</u>
Increase in temporarily restricted net assets	<u>517,658</u>	<u>4,498</u>
Change in net assets	974,599	131,588
Net assets at the beginning of period	<u>10,254,470</u>	<u>10,122,882</u>
Net assets at the end of period	\$ <u>11,229,069</u>	<u>10,254,470</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
4

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*
Statements of Cash Flows
Years Ended June 30, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 974,599	131,588
Adjustment to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation	188,715	188,407
Effect of change in operating assets and liabilities:		
Prepaid expenses	(39,583)	90,412
Accounts payable	(45,252)	1,718
Accrued payroll and vacation pay	29,499	67,853
Accrued insurance obligations	157,709	99,772
Accrued other	<u>26,555</u>	<u>1,200</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>1,292,242</u>	<u>580,950</u>
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchase of certificates of deposit	(1,013,987)	(2,005,645)
Redemption of certificates of deposit	2,005,645	-
Purchases of property and equipment	<u>(252,612)</u>	<u>(71,050)</u>
Net cash provided (used) by investing activities	<u>739,046</u>	<u>(2,076,695)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Principal payments on mortgage payable	<u>(55,555)</u>	<u>(55,844)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	1,975,733	(1,551,589)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>5,330,131</u>	<u>6,881,720</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	\$ <u>7,305,864</u>	<u>5,330,131</u>
Supplemental Cash Flow Disclosures:		
Interest paid	\$ <u>7,214</u>	<u>8,326</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
5

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, *an International Association*
Notes to the Financial Statements
June 30, 2017 and 2016

1. CHURCH AND ACTIVITIES:

The United Church of God, *an International Association*, (herein referred as the "Church") is a worldwide religious association. In the United States of America, the Church is a California Nonprofit Religious Corporation (incorporated on May 10, 1995). Affairs of the Church are coordinated through the Home Office located in Milford, Ohio, where the state of Ohio has the Church officially registered.

The Church is not affiliated with other religious churches, nor does it publicly appeal for funds or involve itself in politics. The mission of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples.

The Church is overseen by a General Conference of Elders, which, in turn, appoints a 12-member Council of Elders to function as a board of directors that establishes operational policies for the Church. The officers and employees of the Church are responsible for operation of the Church in conformance with Council policies.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES:

Basis of presentation

The accompanying financial statements include only the activity of the Home Office for the Church.

The Church has associated organizations, operating in other countries, which have resources that are principally derived and expended locally. The Church provides grants-in-aid and other services to some of these organizations. The accounts of these organizations are not included in the accompanying financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis in accordance with the AICPA Audit and Accounting Guide, "Not-for-Profit Organizations." The significant accounting policies followed are described below.

Revenue recognition

Unrestricted net assets represent those resources of the Church that are not subject to donor-imposed stipulations. Unrestricted net assets may be designated for specific purposes by actions of the Council of Elders or may otherwise be limited by contractual agreements with outside parties.

Temporarily restricted net assets represent contributions that are subject to donor-imposed restrictions that can be fulfilled by actions of the Church pursuant to those stipulations or that expire by the passage of time. Temporarily restricted contributions received and expended in the same fiscal year are recorded as unrestricted revenues.

6

Church support

Members of the Church practice tithing (which is the donation of ten percent of one's "net" income for the Church's unrestricted use). The majority of Church support and revenue consist of such unrestricted donations, whether from individuals directly to the Home Office or from monies received by local congregations and subsequently given to the Home Office.

Members also save an additional ten percent of their annual "net" income for personal use in attending biblically mandated festivals or holy days. This is commonly referred to as the second tithe. Members also contribute to the Church a portion of the second tithe that they save for use at the annual festivals. These contributions, known as the "Festival Fund," are used to pay for expenses involved in festival operations and to assist needy members and their families so they can attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Funds are also sent internationally to assist members.

Those members who are financially able contribute to the "Assistance Fund." Monies contributed to the fund are used to assist the needy.

Members may designate that their contributions be used to support the Church internationally. This fund is known as the "International Fund."

Use of estimates

The financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles which require management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts of assets and liabilities, the disclosure of contingent liabilities as of the financial statement date, and the amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Income taxes

The Church is exempt from Federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donations to the Church are tax-deductible under IRC Section 170(b)(1)(A). However, income from certain activities not directly related to the Church's tax-exempt purpose would be subject to taxation as unrelated business income. The Church has been granted tax-exempt status in the states in which it operates that provide exemptions from taxes.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash and investments with initial maturities of three months or less.

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Certificates of deposit

As of June 30, 2017, the Church owned one certificate of deposit at one financial institution. The certificate of deposit had an initial maturity of one year. The fair value of that certificate of deposit was \$1,013,987. As of June 30, 2016, the Church owned two certificates of deposit at a financial institution with one with an initial maturity of one year and the other with an initial maturity of nine months and values of \$1,003,290 and \$1,002,355, respectively. Fair value approximates cost.

Concentration of credit risk

The Church maintains its cash and certificates of deposit at several commercial and savings banks which, at times, exceed federally insured limits. The Church has not experienced any losses in such accounts and believes it is not exposed to any significant credit risk.

Property and equipment

Purchased property and equipment are recorded at cost. Donations of property and equipment are recorded as support at their estimated fair value on the date of donation. Such donations are reported as unrestricted support unless the donor has restricted the donated asset to be used for a specific purpose. Major improvements to real property are capitalized and normal repair and maintenance costs are expensed as incurred.

Property and equipment owned by the Church are depreciated using the straight-line method over their estimated useful life as follows:

Computer/Information Systems	3 years
Office Equipment	5 years
Office Furniture and Fixtures	7 years
Land Improvements	10 years
Buildings	40 years

Components of programs and supporting services

Field Ministry/Local Congregations: This function includes expenses pertaining to the field ministry, local congregations and youth camps.

International: This function includes expenses pertaining to the support of international congregations and offices.

Public Proclamation: This area contains all media related expenses.

Festivals: This function includes costs that are directly involved in the fall Festival of Tabernacles and the other annual festivals.

Home Office: This function includes administrative and other expenses for the Home Office.

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Council of Elders: The expenses in this function are those that pertain to the Council of Elders, including phone and face-to-face conferences.

General Conference: Expenses in this function include any expenses relating to the Cincinnati, Ohio, General Conference held in May.

Executive Reserve: This function includes funds set aside for special projects, capital expenditures, employee benefits, or other expenditures that may occur during the year.

Subsequent events

The Church evaluates events and transactions occurring subsequent to the date of the financial statements for matters requiring recognition or disclosure in the financial statements. The accompanying financial statements consider events through November 15, 2017, the date on which the financial statements were available to be issued.

3. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT:

Property and equipment consisted of the following at June 30:

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
Buildings	\$ 4,849,832	4,658,086
Land	421,952	402,952
Land improvements	396,551	396,551
Furniture and fixtures	48,907	35,827
Office equipment	559,043	607,757
Vehicles	<u>63,114</u>	<u>63,114</u>
Total property and equipment	6,339,399	6,164,287
Less: accumulated depreciation	<u>2,396,117</u>	<u>2,284,902</u>
	<u>\$ 3,943,282</u>	<u>3,879,385</u>

4. OBLIGATIONS UNDER OPERATING LEASES:

The Church leases automobiles pursuant to operating lease agreements. The Church's future minimum lease payments for all non-cancelable operating leases are as follows:

<u>Years Ending June 30,</u>	
2018	\$ 152,072
2019	110,624
2020	<u>54,287</u>
Total future minimum lease payments	<u>\$ 316,983</u>

Rent and lease expenses for the years ended June 30, 2017 and 2016 were \$180,814 and \$195,957, respectively.

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5. DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PENSION PLAN:

Effective April 1, 1999 the Church established a 403(b) thrift plan for all full time employees. Matching contributions were made for the years ended June 30, 2017 and 2016 in the amount of \$174,297 and \$98,374, respectively.

6. MORTGAGES PAYABLE:

In November 2008, the Church signed a \$350,000 mortgage with Prosperity Bank, secured by a church building. The mortgage was to be repaid in monthly installments over fifteen years, with an interest rate at 6.526%. In June 2014, the note with Prosperity Bank was refinanced and a new mortgage was issued through a member of the church. The new note has a principal amount of \$260,000 and will be repaid in monthly installments over 8 years, with an interest rate of 3.00%. The balance at June 30, 2017 and 2016 was \$169,722 and \$200,721, respectively.

In June 2014, the Church signed a \$65,000 mortgage with Church of Christ, secured by a church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 8 years, with an interest rate of 0.00%. The balance at June 30, 2017 and 2016 was \$39,867 and \$48,073, respectively. No interest has been imputed on the mortgage, as the amount was deemed immaterial.

In December 2014, the Church signed a \$25,000 mortgage with United Church of God, Fort Wayne, secured by a church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 10 years, with an interest rate of 0.50%. The balance at June 30, 2017 and 2016 was \$18,662 and \$21,125, respectively.

In December 2014, the Church signed a \$75,000 mortgage with United Church of God, Indianapolis, secured by a church building. The mortgage will be repaid in monthly installments over 10 years, with an interest rate of 2.50%. The balance at June 30, 2017 and 2016 was \$58,849 and \$64,336, respectively.

In 2010, the Church received a building as part of a contribution that included an assumed mortgage with a balance of \$151,000 at the time of contribution. The mortgage is secured by the church building. The mortgage will be repaid in 215 monthly installments of \$700 and 1 payment of \$500 maturing in December, 2029, with an interest rate of 0.00%. The balance at June 30, 2017 and 2016 was \$96,400 and \$104,800, respectively. No interest has been imputed on the mortgage, as the amount was deemed immaterial.

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association
Notes to the Financial Statements
June 30, 2017 and 2016

The future minimum payments on the mortgage payables are as follows:

Years Ending June 30,	
2018	\$ 58,057
2019	59,221
2020	60,419
2021	61,653
2022	62,923
Thereafter	81,227
Total	\$ 383,500

7. COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES:

The Church is currently making discretionary payments to certain individuals. The payments totaled approximately \$1,064,000 and \$950,000 for the years ended June 30, 2017 and 2016, respectively. These discretionary payments are provided, in part, based upon the individual's needs and, accordingly, could be discontinued in the future. No amounts have been accrued in the accompanying financial statements for future payments relating to these arrangements. The Church is self-insured for medical and dental insurance and maintains a stop-loss coverage policy covering individual claims in excess of predetermined amounts. Aggregate annual claims are also capped at a fixed rate. Self-insurance costs are accrued based upon the aggregate of the liability for reported claims and an estimated liability for claims incurred but not reported.

8. TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS:

Temporarily restricted net assets are available for the following purposes at June 30:

	2017	2016
Studio Fund	\$ 557,966	-
Good Works Program	39,432	68,217
Building Fund	30,002	41,525
	\$ 627,400	109,742

Net assets of \$92,717 and \$79,664 were released during 2017 and 2016, respectively, from donor restrictions by incurring maintenance expenses satisfying the restricted purposes of funds held within the Building Fund and by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes specified by the donors within the Good Works Program.

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association
Schedule of Functional Expenses
Year Ended June 30, 2016

	Program Services				Management and General			Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	Executive Reserve	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 4,343,318	3,850	-	1,538,187	798,412	146,100	-	6,829,867
Contracted services and fees	28,711	6,442	-	279,351	186,611	-	5,680	506,795
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	1,150,255	-	-	-	1,150,255
Print media and advertising	5,664	13,447	-	1,071,248	15,271	-	4,700	1,110,330
Postage and shipping	12,232	7,410	-	902,219	58,102	-	3,799	983,762
Building and equipment lease/rental	25,926	161,570	-	4,891	3,570	-	-	195,957
Telephone and utilities	38,262	285	1,317	1,907	100,292	-	-	142,063
Supplies	34,157	11,610	-	16,871	43,152	10,384	1,098	117,272
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	793,478	28,371	130,740	13,412	109,953	1,227	14,889	1,092,070
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	188,407	-	-	188,407
Grants and charitable support:								
International support	-	1,439	1,393,813	334,103	580	10,000	-	1,739,935
Domestic support:								
Assistance to the needy	743,568	157,457	-	-	49,323	-	-	950,348
Allocations to local congregations	1,521,339	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,521,339
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,193,082	-	-	1,193,082
Other	29,624	-	-	5,582	148,457	-	-	183,663
Total expenses	\$ 7,576,279	391,881	1,525,870	5,318,026	2,895,212	167,711	30,166	17,905,145

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UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, an International Association
Schedule of Functional Expenses
Year Ended June 30, 2017

	Program Services				Management and General			Totals
	Ministerial Services/Field Ministry/Local Congregations	Festivals	International	Public Proclamation	Council of Elders/Home Office/Insurance & Benefit Plans	Executive Reserve	General Conference	
Salaries and related benefits	\$ 4,326,360	-	-	1,588,806	907,662	59,350	-	6,882,178
Contracted services and fees	32,739	4,913	-	273,255	217,817	1,213	8,046	537,983
Broadcast media and advertising	-	-	-	846,524	-	-	-	846,524
Print media and advertising	10,922	14,251	-	802,079	10,404	-	1,676	839,332
Postage and shipping	19,858	9,832	-	887,760	13,700	-	3,608	934,758
Building and equipment lease/rental	26,407	144,467	-	12,540	1,432	-	-	184,846
Telephone and utilities	39,437	1,564	-	2,276	95,165	-	-	138,442
Supplies	39,631	11,159	-	23,811	48,315	2,878	2,462	128,256
Travel, mileage, meals, and lodging	792,800	19,435	113,148	52,023	94,477	-	19,005	1,090,888
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	188,715	-	-	188,715
Grants and charitable support:								
International support	-	4,677	1,445,004	401,684	558	-	-	1,851,923
Domestic support:								
Assistance to the needy	868,540	168,643	-	-	27,023	-	-	1,064,206
Allocations to local congregations	1,539,438	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,539,438
Insurance and health care	-	-	-	-	1,416,359	-	-	1,416,359
Other	23,238	219	-	1,542	32,562	5,655	-	63,216
Total expenses	\$ 7,719,370	379,160	1,558,152	4,892,300	3,054,189	69,096	34,797	17,707,064

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What's New In MEDIA?
BEYOND
TODAY

Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
<i>The Sabbath: Yesterday, Today and in Prophecy</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest</i>	Jan. 14-20
<i>The Final Superpower</i>	Steve Myers	<i>The Final Superpower</i>	Jan. 21-27
<i>Hard Questions: Are Christians Guilty of Idolatry?</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Ten Commandments</i>	Jan. 28-Feb. 3
<i>Why Europe Matters: The Lethal Union of Church and State</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Book of Revelation Unveiled</i>	Feb. 4-10
<i>The Four Horsemen of Revelation</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The Horsemen of Revelation</i>	Feb. 11-17
<i>God's Hand on Nations</i>	Darris McNeely	<i>The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy</i>	Feb. 18-24
<i>Signs in the Heavens</i>	Gary Petty	<i>The Book of Revelation Unveiled</i>	Feb. 25-Mar. 3

UNITED  NEWS

United News Circulation Reaches All-time Record

by Peter Eddington

United News circulation is now the highest it's ever been since the United Church of God began—at 16,134 copies for the November 2017 issue.

We are very encouraged by these figures, which surpass our Church's newspaper circulation from even times when our membership numbers were greater.

One reason for the increased circulation number and larger print run, is that many of our coworkers are now requesting to be added to the UN mailing list. We are very happy to

see our readers and subscribers who donate more regularly to the work of the Church wish to be even more engaged—by keeping abreast of the ongoing news and daily activities of the United Church of God through our newspaper.

We pray that these coworkers and additional readers will eventually be encouraged and feel comfortable enough to grace the doors of our weekly congregation services—as God calls them to His truth and for the opportunity of salvation. [UN](#)

UNITED  NEWS

NEWS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD, AN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION • P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 (513) 576-9796

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 13-14: Salt Lake City Ski Weekend, Salt Lake City, Utah

Feb. 11: Regional Leadership Workshop, Portland, Oregon

March 4: *America the Time is Now!*, Los Angeles, California

March 6-7: *America the Time is Now!*, San Diego, California

March 7-8: *America the Time is Now!*, San Bernardino, California

March 11: *America the Time is Now!*, Garden Grove, California

March 30: Passover

March 31-April 6: Days of Unleavened Bread