



# United Church of God

## *an International Association*

### **eNews from Ministerial and Member Services**

Issue 311

February 2, 2018

### **Personal From the President...**

Dear fellow servants of God,

#### **Update on Allwine trial outcome**

Back in late 2016, we reported on a shocking and tragic event in Minnesota. Amy Allwine, wife of Stephen Allwine, was found dead of a gunshot wound in the Allwine home. A lengthy and in-depth police investigation ensued, and Stephen was eventually charged with premeditated first-degree murder by a Minnesota grand jury. A trial began earlier this month. Because of the sensational nature of the facts surrounding the case, a considerable amount of international and national media covered the events leading up to and including the trial.

Last Wednesday evening, after deliberating a little more than six hours, the Minnesota jury involved in the Amy Allwine murder trial delivered a verdict, finding Stephen Allwine guilty of first degree murder. After now being declared guilty, his formal sentencing is scheduled for Friday morning, February 2. Given the grim details of the terrible death of Amy, we expect media attention to continue for some time.

At this point, it is important to remember that this situation remains profoundly tragic in a highly personal way for many. The justice system has acted and rendered a verdict, which we as a church respect.

But we should remember that this process has been exceptionally hard on both the families involved and close friends and extended members of the families. As innocent independent victims of this tragedy, they face a difficult and challenging mix of strong emotions, including renewed shock and grief that will last for some time. We need to recognize this. Jesus instructed us that we are to love one another, and now is an especially good time to fulfill that.

Minnesota law calls for an automatic appeal, so the process will actually continue in some form. It is my fervent hope that all will continue praying to our merciful Father about the entire situation and be compassionate about what the extended families are going through.

Here is an important point: while we certainly respect the verdict, at the same time we personally are not to sit in judgment. As Jesus Himself instructs us, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). Jesus also tells us that "there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2). We can have confidence that our all-knowing God is aware of all aspects regarding this tragic situation. We need to remember what James, the brother of Jesus, writes to us from a spiritual perspective: "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). As a result, we will not be making speculative comments about the verdict.

As noted, the details of the murder are terrible. Coupled with the fact that Stephen was an elder (although not a pastor or employee of the church) at the time of Amy's death, this has made for heightened media coverage, which we expect will continue in some form. Regarding Stephen's status, it is important to know that during the police investigation, Stephen publicly admitted to conduct that violated the established ethics policy for ministers of the United Church of God, *an International Association*. As a result, and given the church's zero-tolerance application of that policy, the Council of Elders removed Stephen from the ministry in 2017. While that action has been appropriately taken, I do encourage all of us to continue praying to our almighty God for direction and comfort for *all* parties.

It is also important to note that some major media previously and erroneously asserted that the church's teachings on marriage and divorce may have been a contributing factor in the case. As we have been told by those who attended the trial, that was not a major focus during the actual proceedings. As a precaution, we did previously publish a public statement correcting this information, which is available on the Members website at <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/public-statement-trial-of-stephen-allwine-a-former-lay-minister-of-the-united-church-of>. You are welcome to review and refer to that as needed. We may update it as appropriate.

Again, because the details of the murder are so graphic, we expect a considerable amount of public attention about the verdict, both in the short-term and ongoing in the weeks and even months ahead. This public attention may have certain outcomes, including making things more complicated for the families.

On a related matter, given that both the United Church of God and the work that we do may come to the attention of the media as a result of this trial and verdict, I humbly ask that you pray that *all* will serve to ultimately further the will of God, particularly as it concerns what we have been called to do (Romans 12:1). As Paul writes with authority, "we know that *all things* work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Amy Allwine's parents and siblings made this public statement: "We can summon no words to describe life without Amy. We loved her and miss her tremendously. We now turn to the path of privately healing and grieving." I personally ask that we *all* join with them and all the families in praying for this healing.

May the work and mission of God advance urgently in these times of turbulent need. Thank you for your prayers. You remain in mine.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik

## United Youth Camps Video

Pastors: for your advanced planning, the annual camp video can be scheduled for showing in all U.S. congregations on April 7, 14, or 21.

## Youth Instruction Update

Pastors, congregation leaders, parents and members, the latest Family Study Guide, God's Ninth Commandment, for February 2018, has been added to the [Family Study Guides](#) webpage (and the [Family Guide Dropbox](#) location). This Family Study Guide covers God's Ninth Commandment and

will help your family understand what it means to bear false witness and other forms of lying. We will look at biblical examples of lying and the consequences involved. The harmful effects of lying include other additional problems in our lives. Obedience to this commandment against lying leads to the benefits of a happy life.

You can always find the current Family Study Guides in the UCG Family Guide Dropbox. That link is: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ro15p05te19sexo/AAAzs-xKiV-6y6ASumVjFCtAa?dl=0>

As a reminder, previous years' Family Study Guide series can be found on the UCG Family webpage. You can also find the [Family Study Guides Handbook - A Guide for Congregation Implementation](#). Please feel free to share this resource with your leaders and parents.

We invite you to continue to send input and suggestions our way.

-- Randy and Kay Schreiber, Youth Instruction Coordinators

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