

UNITED NEWS

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Special UYC Edition

Flip to the middle and pull out the
2013 United Youth Camps brochure insert!



From THE WORD

What Does It Mean To “Despise Your Youth?”

■ Paul wrote to Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth.” What does that mean for the young Christian today?

by J’Non Whitlark

Is there anything more wonderful than being young, full of energy and strength, experiencing the excitement of first discoveries? “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth,” we read in Ecclesiastes 11:9. What a beautiful image that is to think of: a young man or woman, enjoying life to the fullest, with nothing but optimism and excitement for the future.

It’s no wonder that youth, with its glow of vitality, is often revered as a time set aside for having fun and testing our limits before we’re tied down with the responsibilities of marriage and families of our own. But God didn’t intend for there to be disposable time in our lives, even though Satan does try his best to convince us that youth was made for wasting. Are we in God’s Church swayed by the prevailing winds of self-entitlement and self-indulgence that sweep through our culture? We need to know where we stand, because the stakes are actually quite high. Many of the choices we make at 12, 16 and 25 *can* have a negative or positive impact on us and those we love for the rest of our lives.

A Letter to Timothy—and to Us

Paul told Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

It seems at first to be an odd thing to say, since we don’t have control over what others might think about us. It seems at first that Timothy is a victim of age discrimination, but what Paul was saying is that Timothy should behave in such a way that no one *could* reasonably despise his youth. He was to act with *greater* maturity, with *greater* wisdom, actively exercising the Holy Spirit he had received

through the laying on of hands. He was to be a teacher. As such, it was unacceptable for him to use his youth as a time to spend focused on seeking his own pleasures. It was unacceptable for him to be willingly ignorant of God’s expectations of him, love for him, and his job of ministering to God’s people.

Being young is not a license to act stupidly or experiment with destructive

behaviors. Nor to be foolish, though Satan certainly uses popular culture to imply otherwise. All of us make bad choices and decisions—spiritually mature adults included. But often when we’re young, our spiritual inexperience and desire to be accepted by our peers makes us more vulnerable. The world around us shows youth and beauty as a license for hedonism, where nothing is to be denied. It affects us physically through the food and drink we consume to excess, financially through credit we can’t manage, sexually and emotionally in relationships focused on pleasure instead of God the Father.

Responsibility is something we learn through practice. Using youth as an excuse for poor judgment (as a way of life) or poor character is also learned through practice. Both will accumulate over time, and both are also reinforced every day by our thoughts and actions.

Although God may or may not choose to preserve us from the consequences we earn by making poor decisions, we and maybe others around us may carry mental, emotional, or physical scars for the rest of our lives.

Paul’s letter to Timothy continued: “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:14-15).

Like Timothy, we also are to be an example of godliness within our sphere of influence, which is at the very least our local congregations, our families and



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The second part of Ecclesiastes 11:9 is this: “Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.” We are held accountable for the choices we make as a young man or woman, whether wise or foolish.

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BY THE NUMBERS

4,350

Total responses to *Beyond Today* for the month of January

Camp Report: Winter Camp

East Troy, Wisconsin

December 24-30

by Dan Dowd

This was the second year we used the Camp Timber-lee facility in East Troy, Wisconsin, for Winter Camp, with Dan Dowd taking over as director. This is a beautiful facility located on 650 acres in south-central Wisconsin. It provides a great venue to instruct God's youth in their calling. The Timber-lee staff is a pleasure to work with and the campers (and staff) really enjoy the abundance of well prepared food. This year we hosted 64 campers and 30 staff. It was one of the most peaceful, supportive and cohesive camps that I have ever had the opportunity to be part of.

A regular challenge for Winter Camp is the weather. Will it be cold enough (but not too cold)? Will there be snow? Will

the lakes and ponds freeze sufficiently for us to safely have ice activities? This year God blessed us with all of those conditions after an anxious early December of light snow and cold that would come and go. Because of having the perfect weather, we were able to offer a number of outdoor activity experiences such as cross-country skiing, tubing, tobogganing and winter field sports. Some activities had to be substituted because conditions were not quite adequate (speedway for broomball since the pond ice was not thick enough) but the staff and campers were flexible enough to enjoy the adjustments to the schedule.

The spiritual instruction continues to be a central focus for our UYC camps, and winter camp is no exception. This year's theme of "Calling, Honor and Faith"

was reinforced in the morning compass checks and evening Christian living sessions. The environment at camp allows for a very millennial setting for instruction because there is very little contact or interaction with "the world," and everyone eats together, participates in the activities together and lives together for a week. The calling God is giving to the youth in the Church is very clear in the camp environment.

Part of the challenge of planning winter camp is the overlap with the Winter Family Weekend in Cincinnati—many who want to come cannot do both activities. For 2013 we will not be overlapping the Winter Family Weekend because our reserved dates are Dec. 25-31, 2013. Pre-planning is already underway for 2013,

and we would encourage any youth to consider attending Winter Camp 2013, as well as having interested young adults come and serve as staff! **UN**



Camp Report: Guatemala

San Martín Zapotitlán, Guatemala

December 9-11

by Werner Solórzano

On Dec. 9, 2012, 30 young people of the United Church of God in Guatemala arrived with 11 adults at the place where that year's annual camp was to be held. Israel Robledo, the pastor of UCG for Guatemala, was among the adults who would be serving the young people for the next three days.

Camp was held at a resort which has beautiful green areas with colorful peacocks that walk around freely, hotels, restaurants and swimming pools in one section, and an amusement park and several other attractions across the two-lane inter-

national highway. Although the camp was held in the first section, that didn't hinder the young people from enjoying the latter before they were officially welcomed by Mr. Robledo that Sunday night. He shared this year's theme: "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word" (Psalm 119:19). He also talked about the general and specific objectives for the following days. The general objectives were: confirming the existence of God as our Creator and provider of every good gift (both spiritual and physical); understanding Christ's role as the leader of His Church and our role as His representatives; and the

law of God as the way of life towards success. The specific objectives were: harmonious fellowship; developing values such as solidarity, team work and putting others' needs ahead of our own; and developing sports and cultural skills, which enhance physical and mental development.

Each day two meetings were held in which several topics were discussed. Leadership, choosing a vocation, multiple intelligences, dating, general exhortation and Christian values were among the things that Mr. Robledo and other adults talked about.

There was plenty of room for outdoor activities (such as soccer, swimming and

mini-golf) and group dynamics which, according to one young woman, "taught us fellowship, planning and confidence."

Before parting, an activity was carried out in which questions were asked to the young people regarding the topics of the meetings. A young man, David Gordillo, was selected as the best camper.

The young woman we quoted above said of camp: "These moments of joy were very pleasant because we did what is stated in Proverbs 17:17: 'A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.' I hope in God to have the blessing of going back to the next camp." **UN**



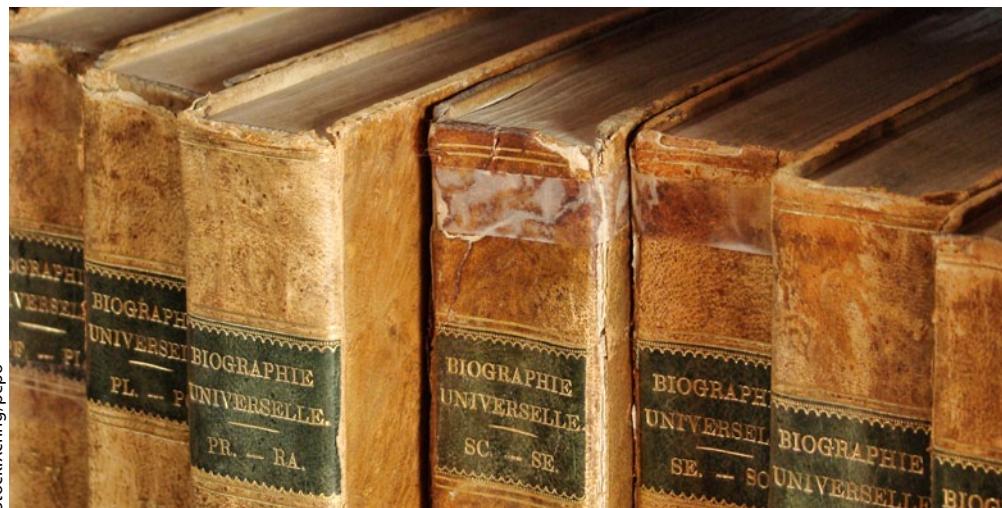


AARON DEAN
Financial Services
Operation Manager

A wise old sage often told me to surround myself with wise men. I suppose it comes from Proverbs 13:20: "He that walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." This was good advice since we often get in trouble with our immature friends. So I was always looking for wise men to be around.

I remember asking, "When do you become someone wise enough for others to be around?" I didn't get an answer. Most of my time with him I spent practicing Proverbs 17:28: "Even a fool when he holds his peace, is counted wise." I listened to countless discussions with those considered great by this world. I learned they didn't have answers.

Surrounding yourself with the unwise does indeed cause considerable damage. Solomon's son Rehoboam rejected the advice of his wise counselors and took the advice of his younger friends. The story is related in 1 Kings 12. The wise men said he should be a servant and be kind to his people. If he did that, they would serve him forever. His young friends advised him to be tougher than his father and demand more to prove he was king.



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Choosing the wrong advice cost him most of his kingdom, as 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel deserted him and made Jeroboam king. In doing so they split the magnificent nation, which his grandfather David and father Solomon had built (with God's blessing) into perhaps the wealthiest nation on earth at the time.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). Those fortunate enough to have the knowledge and proper fear of God are far ahead of those without this advantage. I consider it a great blessing to have been raised in the Church; to have always been taught about God and Jesus Christ. I have had the privilege to raise my son and daughter with this same knowledge and to share many of life's

eternal truths with others.

The deadline for this article was Jan. 16—the 27th anniversary of the death of my closest friend and sage, Herbert Armstrong. He was part of my life for as long as I can remember. I thank God he was willing to listen as God him gave biblical understanding and motivated many of us to also pass to others the truth of God's Word.

How would I answer my own question—"When do you become someone wise enough for others to be around?" When you know the truth of God and follow his laws, you have something very worthwhile to share with the people around you in the way you live your life. With this knowledge and following this way, you become someone wise enough to be around. **UN**

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 **From The COUNCIL**

Walking the Talk

■ Where what we preach meets how we live.



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by **John Elliott**

Being in God's Church brings you and me a unique opportunity to know God's



plan for humanity and celebrate it on Sabbaths and Holy Days. We understand biblical prophecies and take every opportunity to share the gospel of the Kingdom of God and encourage others to keep His commandments. We can feel a sense of security from the truth we cherish and the words we proclaim.

Jesus' parables raise an issue that you and I sometimes fail to fully realize. It's one thing to teach and cherish this way, but quite another to faithfully live it. Remember Paul explaining that the things he so strongly believed in were things he tended to not actually do? "For I delight in the law

of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22-23). Similarly, Jesus describes 10 virgins who all have burning lamps complete with oil. The difference was the amount of oil each person possessed at a crucial time. Again, it's one thing to be in the Church, quite another to be practicing what we believe. All the teachers in the New Testament compel us to be Christ-like in how we live. In doing so we become the evidence that God's way

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Announcements



Zachariah Alan Creech

Births

Joshua and Lizzy Creech of the Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation would like to announce the birth of their second child, **Zachariah Alan Creech**. Zachariah was born Feb. 17, 2012, weighing 5 lbs., 11 oz. and was 19 ½ in. long. Big brother Liam (2) was very happy to meet him, and the two of them keep their parents happy and busy!

Anniversaries

Longtime members of the Church, **Conway and Dorothy Edhegard**, of the Mobile, Alabama, congregation, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Dec. 6, 2012. The following Sabbath after services, the members enjoyed a cake to celebrate the occasion. Fellowship was enjoyed by all in recognizing their special day. The Edhegards have been faithful members of the Church since the early 60s. Their family members joined in the congratulations with phone calls since they live out of town. They are looking forward to another 65 years of marital bliss!

Jim and Gayle Wilkins recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Jim and Gayle were married Nov. 30, 1962. They have two daughters, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Jim was baptized in August of 1972 and Gayle in October of 1972. Jim was ordained an elder in 1994. Jim pastors the Laurel, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana, congregations. Jim and Gayle celebrated their anniversary with a potluck and special cake on Nov. 24 with the Laurel congregation and on Dec. 1 with cake and light refreshments with the brethren in the New Orleans congregation. Both congregations deeply appreciate all the Wilkins have brought with them to the area.

Obituaries

Gladys Irene (Reinard) Gaugler, 88, of Port Trevorton, Pennsylvania, died at her home on Dec. 31, 2012.

She is survived by four daughters, Mary Wilhide and husband Dennis of Port Trevorton; Rosalee Massie and husband John of Mattawana, Pennsylvania; Linda Zeigler and husband Bob of Port Trevorton; and Kathy Charles and husband Tom



Conway & Dorothy Edhegard

of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania; and one daughter-in-law, Patty Gaugler of Selinsgrove. Her husband, Edwin C. Gaugler, and her son, Robert Gaugler, preceded her in death. She is survived by 15 grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren.

Gladys and Edwin came to understand about keeping God's Sabbath in the 1950s. They were baptized in 1959. In 1995, she became part of the United Church of God and attended the Lewistown, Pennsylvania, congregation. Gladys served as a deaconess for over 30 years.

She was a dedicated mother and wife and leaves a legacy of a strong faith and love for her family. During her life she enjoyed living on their farm, gardening, sewing and being surrounded with her family and friends. She especially had a tender love and patience for children.

She waits now for her resurrection and being part of God's Kingdom.

Lawrence Owens, 83, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, died Dec. 23, 2012, in his Minneapolis home.

He was born June 12, 1929, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Burcher and Christine Owens. After graduating from Sumner High School in June of 1947, he enlisted in the Army, where he served three years in Korea and Japan. He played trumpet in the original Field Army Band for foreign dignitaries and heads of state.

After the military, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to study drafting at Dunwoody Institute, and electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota.

Mr. Owens had a very strong family ethic. His wife was dear to his heart, and after 58 years of marriage, their love was still strong and tender. He was a loving, caring and hands-on father to his



Lawrence Owens



Jim & Gayle Wilkins

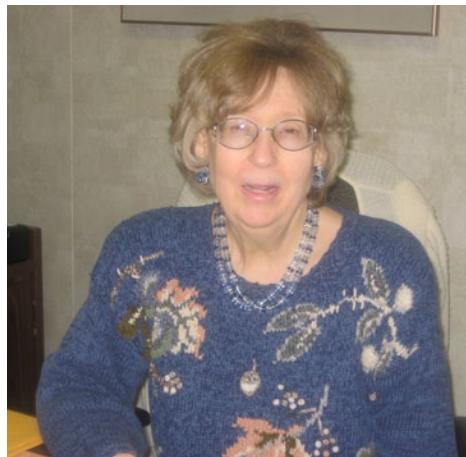
five children. He was very close to his brother, other relatives and the "Minnesota Family." In addition to his physical family, he loved his Church family as well. His favorite pastimes were playing tennis and doing Bible studies with his children, dancing with his wife in the living room and listening to classical music. In recent years, he developed a witty personality, often making clever remarks during family conversations.

He is survived by his wife Freddie Mae, of Minneapolis, and his children Rachel Spurgeon (Tim), Anne Jenkins (Reginald), Steven, Philip, and David (Tallulah); six grandchildren: Kedem Spurgeon, Emmanuel, Arianna, Myasia, and Daniel and Euodias Lawrence Owens. Brothers Earl, James, and John; sisters Burcher, Artis, and Jacqueline, and many other relatives also survive him.

His father and mother, Burcher and Christine Owens, his sister Elizabeth, and brother Willard preceded him in death.

Lawrence came into the Church in September 1963 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He went to church services and returned the following week only to find no one at services. He asked a janitor, "Where did all the people go?" but the janitor didn't know. He thought the church had gone to the place of safety and he had missed it. He returned the following week, and the church was back. He asked the minister, "Where did everyone go?" and the minister told him that they all went to the Feast of Tabernacles, which he knew nothing about. From then on, he was at every Feast of Tabernacles until 2009, when he could no longer attend services.

Lawrence loved God's way of life and stayed faithful to that calling until the end. He will be greatly missed by his fam-



Jean Carolyn Shamblin



Gladys Irene (Reinard) Gaugler

ily and his many friends. We look forward to seeing him again in the Kingdom of God.

Jean Carolyn Shamblin, beloved wife of Ward Shamblin (a longtime local elder in the Lubbock, Texas, congregation) passed away on Dec. 11, 2012, at the age of 68, from ovarian cancer. Carolyn was surrounded by her husband, Ward, her children, and pastor and his wife, Tom and Lisa Damour.

Carolyn and Ward recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August 2012 during the time that she was still battling cancer. They celebrated at a church potluck social hosted by their three children and the UCG Lubbock church.

She had three children, Lorrye Harden, Sharla Turner and Andrew Shamblin; and grandchildren Darci Barney, Brandon Harden and Baruch Shamblin.

Carolyn and Ward came into the Radio Church of God in Abilene, Texas, and were baptized together on July 31, 1965. Carolyn was a deeply caring, compassionate lady. She was devoted to her family and God. She worked full-time in a variety of office positions for many years, but her greatest enjoyment was being a homemaker. She loved decorating her home and also church services and potlucks. She played the piano for church for many years until arthritis made it too difficult. She was also known for her exceptional memory of names, dates, places, etc.

Carolyn was a very hard worker. Over the years, she worked at different places, including the Lubbock ISD maintenance plant, Equifax, and 19 years at Lubbock City Hall. She did a large variety of office administration work.

Carolyn was the oldest child of James Neal Shepherd and Emogene (Harlan) Shepherd of Sweetwater, Texas, and the older sister of Betty (Shepherd) Davis of Sweetwater, Texas. She was raised in Lubbock, Fort Worth, and Rotan, Texas. She graduated from Rotan High School in May 1962 as Valedictorian, and married her sweetheart, Ward Shamblin, on Aug. 3, 1962.

The family would like to thank everyone for the outpouring of love and support expressed through the many prayers, cards, messages, calls, visits, gifts and offers of help and support. These deeds

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Announcements

Continued from page 4

have been tremendously uplifting and helpful.

Vera Mai Robinson Worrell died on Oct. 10, 2012, after a short bout with an upper respiratory infection. She had battled multiple myeloma and heart disease for many years.

She leaves her six children: Robert Coleman Worrell, Anna Marie German, Jimmy Dale Worrell, Mary Jo Jackson, Kathy Lynn Sanny, and Joyce Faye Gelvin. Kathy and her husband Greg Sanny and Mary Jo and her granddaughter Peyton Jackson all attend the Northwest Arkansas congregation. She also leaves 24 grandchildren (She was preceded in death by one grandson, Kenneth Greenway Kendall), 35 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren. She leaves two sisters: Ruby Pike of Tennessee and Bettye Abrahamson of Michigan.

Vera was born in Lenox, Tennessee, on Oct. 24, 1925, the fourth child and first daughter of Leslie Elihu Robinson and Mary Evie Neil. She married Robert Lee Worrell in January of 1946. He was an airplane mechanic during World War II, and she became acquainted with him through her brother Paul while they were stationed in England. They met after the war and soon married.

She started attending Radio Church of God in 1962 and was baptized on the Feast of Trumpets that same year in Memphis, Tennessee. She started attending United Church of God in 2005 and attended until her death, rarely missing even after she was very frail. She had been taking *The*



Vera Mai Robinson Worrell

Plain Truth and *The Bible Correspondence Course* and listening to Herbert Armstrong since her marriage to Robert Worrell, at his insistence. At first she thought, "All these churches can't be wrong!" and she was horrified by the things Mr. Armstrong was saying, but as she studied the Bible she started to realize he was telling the truth about the seventh day Sabbath and about the holidays of Christmas, Easter, etc. She finally realized she had to do something and shortly after that she discovered there was a "local" church about 100 miles away in Memphis. She started going from the Kenton, Tennessee, area to Memphis for services as often as she could with her children.

Vera considered the day of her baptism as the most important day of her life because it was her commitment to obey God. She tried wholeheartedly to do that the rest of her life, but with the realization that only by the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and God's grace are we saved.

Vera had many wonderful friends in the Memphis and Northwest Arkansas

area and around the country, in and out of the Church. Even though her family had grown to be practically a tribe, she did all she could to keep contact with every one to let them all know they mattered to her.

She will be greatly missed. We look forward to the day of Christ's return when she will rise to meet our Savior and we can all be reunited.

Lawrence (Larry) Hale Sr. was born in Grandview, Texas, to Tom and Martha Hale on April 24, 1926. The family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where Lawrence grew up. He died Dec. 20, 2012.

Lawrence was baptized into God's Church in 1963 and ordained a deacon in 1975 (coordinating duties for the kitchen, parking, hall set-up and security). His strong faith moved him to teach and encourage his family to live God's way. In 1993, he was ordained an elder in the Church, and enjoyed giving encouraging, rousing sermons and sermonettes. Even though he had been given a prognosis in the early 1980s that he would eventually lose his eyesight, it finally happened in 2003. Despite this devastating occurrence, he continued his speaking schedule, often committing entire sermons (scripture references and all) to memory.

Lawrence leaves, to cherish his memory, his second wife, Miranda (Halzo) Hale, with whom he resided until death. Lawrence and Miranda were married in San Francisco, California, December 21, 1997. In June, 2000, they moved to Anthem, Arizona, where they further established their home and lives together.

He is survived by nine children: his sons Lawrence Jr., Lorenzo, Walter, Cornelius "Corny" and Sherm Sr.; his daughters



Lawrence Hale, Sr.

Lyndia, twins Denise Hale and Doreen (Hale) Gardner, Ethelene "Missy" (Hale) Pippion); plus adopted son and daughter (Verben Lee and Irma Shearrod-Owens). In addition, he is survived by four daughters-in-law; four sons-in-law; one brother-in-law; three sisters-in-law; one step-granddaughter; 27 grandchildren; 31 great-grandchildren; plus extended relatives (including cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws).

He will be remembered for his special brand of humor, which helped him along the way, the exemplary courage with which he bore his health challenges, his contagious optimism in the face of great adversity and his sustaining faith in God through Christ. Lawrence (Larry) Hale Sr. will be missed by the many family and friends who knew, loved and were inspired by him.



Local Church UPDATES



The sister congregations of Elmira and Buffalo, New York, had a picnic in June, which was a big success.

Buffalo and Elmira Congregation Share Picnic

Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for good for those who love God. That was certainly the case on the gorgeous Sunday morning of June 24, when the congregation

from Buffalo, New York, area gathered for their annual summer picnic. This year the event was hosted by Marcus Regoord, an elder in Buffalo, and his family. Their home is in Eden, New York, aptly named for the peaceful setting where the 40 or so picnickers enjoyed their time together.

Johnnie Lambert, who pastors both the Elmira and Buffalo, New York, congregations, and his wife Hazel, joined in the fun, giving brethren the opportunity to enjoy their company once more before Mr. Lambert jetted off on another trip to Estonia. Although the sister congregations of Elmira and Buffalo have to share Mr. Lambert with the work he does in Eastern Europe, they feel blessed to be a part of the hard work and fine job he is doing there. Even from "half way around the world" Mr. Lambert continues to provide Sabbath messages by way of webcasts back to those attending their local services.

A comfortably warm day with just enough cloud cover to provide shelter from the sun smiled on the older,



The Lawton, Oklahoma, church campout.

younger and in-betweeners as they collectively engaged in outdoor games or leisurely enjoyed each others' company from the sidelines in the comfort of their lawn chairs. Typical picnic fare was served to the hungry group, and the gentle chatter of fellowship blended mutually as dear friends, old and new, delighted in this pleasurable way to spend a Sunday afternoon. After the delicious meal the more adventurous some donned their swim suits and went for a refreshing dip in the brook that winds lazily through the backyard while the less energetic relaxed nearby.

Picnics have a way of making memories, and this year's get-together in Buffalo will truly be one to be remembered.

Lawton, Oklahoma, Congregation Enjoys Labor Day Campout

The beautiful Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Lawton, Oklahoma, was once again the site of the Lawton, Oklahoma, congregation's Labor Day Campout (Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2012). On Friday night, 11 campers from the Oklahoma City and Lawton UCG congregations enjoyed a meal together and then spent Sabbath evening visiting in the folding chair "fellowship circle." On Sabbath morning, everyone enjoyed a hearty breakfast and more visiting before preparations began for Sabbath services. Several additional members from Oklahoma City and Lawton arrived for "church in the woods," complete with electric piano powered by a 12 volt battery.

An adult buffalo wandered into the camp during the song service. He listened calmly and attentively while the 17 members in attendance sang "Great God Who Made the Universe." The buffalo seemed to enjoy hearing His creator praised! Had he stayed longer, he would have heard UCG pastor Mark

Please see page 7

Let No One Despise Your Youth

Continued from page 1

our circle of friends. What a tall order! To walk against the tide of society to be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity—not easy stuff. Consider Paul’s letter to Timothy and how it applies to us today. We are to be aware of how we speak to others and represent God with our words. We should be good examples in our actions and behavior, reflecting the love of our Father in outgoing concern for others.

And we are to be actively working with the Holy Spirit we are given at baptism and growing our faith by doing good works. And we are to be pure—which in a world such as this certainly requires God’s help (2 Timothy 2:22).

Is this completely overwhelming? Does it seem impossible to achieve? Well, yes, it can seem that way, especially if some bad habits have already woven themselves into the fiber of our character. But *it can be done*. The impossible is absolutely possible with God (Philippians 4:13). Most people in God’s Church don’t talk openly about the wretched and miserable character traits they have overcome or are still overcoming. But everyone has to overcome, and we are all in this together. The apostle Paul himself was guilty of persecuting the brethren, and played an active role in the death of several Christians. But God opened his eyes, and led him to repent and preach the gospel (Acts 7:58-59, 1 Timothy 1:12-16, Romans 7:24-25).

We hear great stories about miracles where God protected the life or property of Church members in some very dramatic way—and these stories are inspiring and wonderful! But we don’t as often have opportunity to celebrate the many, many stories of God miraculously saving spiritual lives. God can work amazing miracles in our hearts and minds if we will accept His help and guidance. The greatest miracle happens in the secret places of the heart (Acts 3:19, 26).

Family and Friendship: A Light in a Dark Place

We need each other. God didn’t tell us to assemble together with other brethren each week on a whim. Our church congregations should become like families—a support system where the members love each other despite our differences in personality. And like family, we should all be working together at our responsibilities. We should have fellowship together often, not just at church, but time spent in each others’ homes to build our relationships to the point that we can actually share the important things that we face as Christians. We need to surround ourselves with those who are excited about God’s way of life.

Our choice of friends can be especially important when we’re young, as we experience more independence from our families at school and work. Our group of friends can have a tremendous influence on us, and we them. But we always have to be conscious of the direction and weight of that influence and make decisions,

however difficult, according to where we are headed and where we want to be. If wisdom comes from God (it does—Proverbs 2:6), then we’d better be asking very earnestly for that gift and preparing to use it to walk (or run) in the right direction. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but even he was completely led in a wrong direction by the company he chose to keep (1 Kings 11:1-10).

In the book of Daniel, we see an encouraging example of four young men who did what was right without their parents, grandparents or elders there to influence them. They had positive reinforcement only from each other as captives in pagan Babylon, but because they obeyed God without consideration for their lives, God blessed them with remarkable skills and gifts. When the king tested them, they performed ten times better than those around them (Daniel 1:17-20).

Could God have plucked them out of Babylon? Yes, certainly, but He did not. Instead, they had to prove themselves there, surrounded by an extremely pagan society, to love God more than their own lives. He then gave them what they needed for success within the confines of their captivity. In the world—but not of it. The difference is huge, and it’s one that we also must make in our lives every day. There is no vacation from being in the world, even at Sabbath services, the Feast of Tabernacles or a Church camp. Even then, we make decisions about the company we keep and the attitudes and behaviors that ultimately make up our character.

Learning the Hard Way

I confess that before my wake-up call (see sidebar), the first love had always seemed just out of reach. I didn’t quite understand how second generation

Just don't despise your own valuable youth by wasting it on so many things that can lead you away from what you know is right.

Christians could have quite the same level of passion as first. After all, we hadn’t come out of another religion or some other way of life that’s different from God’s truth.

I was so wrong. It’s there for *all* whom God calls, if we aren’t too busy with the cares of this life to seek God in earnest. Timothy was a second generation believer, also. He learned about God’s way of life from his mother and grandmother (1 Timothy 1:5). As a young man, he answered the same call that you are perhaps being offered even now (Acts 2:38-40).

The second part of Ecclesiastes 11:9 is this: “Walk in the ways of your heart,

The Wake-Up Call

Here’s some honesty for you: When it comes to youth and responsibility, I don’t think I’ve been a Timothy, or a Daniel, though I admire them very much. When I was busy being busy, I was despising my youth. Thinking back, I have often felt like an utter failure, having wasted many years of greater spiritual growth because I let the world distract me.

At some level I may have even wanted distraction because I didn’t have the guts to change—yet. I was fearful, letting my cowardice block the way between me and God. I didn’t realize the gravity that cowardice or of being guilty of lying to myself (see Revelation 21:8). But deep down, every second (or third or later) generation Christian knows enough to know when God will be pleased or not by our choices. That “yet” is a good indicator that we are willfully ignoring God’s Holy Spirit working with us. If we’re honest, we need to ask ourselves some tough questions.

How is our relationship with God to be impacted by partying, drinking or spending time in nightclubs, even when accompanied by Church friends? If we choose to fill our minds with justifications, excuses, or avoid the issue by filling our time with video games, TV or other entertainment, then we probably won’t have time to think about literally what we could do—right now—to express love to God with more than just an emotion.

As sometimes happens to those who profess Christianity and who are hitting the cruise control, I got a wake-up call. Though different for all of us, when we are faced with circumstances

completely beyond our control, we can turn inward and bottle up our pain, we can take our frustration out on others and try to solve the unsolvable, or we can turn to God our Father, and give it and ourselves fully into His care.

When my beloved church congregation was forcibly ripped apart a couple of years ago, I was certainly fired to greater consciousness. I wouldn’t wish

“That ‘yet’ is a good indicator that we are willfully ignoring God’s Holy Spirit working with us. If we’re honest, we need to ask ourselves some tough questions.”

the circumstances on anyone, but I know many who have experienced something similar.

That pain caused results that were ultimately worth something, though, because who can truly understand what we are feeling but God? Through sleepless nights and hours of weeping, I opened my heart fully to God. I prayed through the hurt and the anger and the human need for some kind of justice where none could be found. I had lost so much, but through that pain and grief, I found something much greater: the first love (Mark 12:30, Romans 8:37-39).

derful in your life. Everything is clearer after inviting His light to shine in.”

Be a Timothy, or a Daniel, if you can. But if it’s too late for that, then be like the prodigal son, or King David, who after making huge mistakes turned to God for forgiveness instead of justifying them further! (See Luke 15:10-19; 2 Samuel 12).

Just don’t despise your own valuable youth by wasting it on so many things that can lead you away from what you know is right.

If you haven’t already, learn to appreciate this as a time when you can learn how to communicate openly with God and learn to put your trust in Him throughout your life (Psalm 71:5). He loves you more than you can even comprehend, and wants very much to hear what you have to say! (1 John 4:19).

At the start of this article, I asked a question: Is there anything more wonderful than being young? Well, yes, there is. Much more wonderful is to be young and pouring that energy, strength, and love of life into the most important relationship we can ever have, with our Father in heaven. It is the most blessed choice we can possibly make. **UN**

Welch's pre-feast sermon "The Twelve Characteristics of the Kingdom of God."

On Sunday afternoon, campers enjoyed another fine group breakfast and more fellowship. Everyone then went together for a group lunch at a restaurant in the rustic town of Medicine Park. To beat the 100-plus degree heat, the children swam in the town swimming hole. Everyone also enjoyed ice cream and walking up and down the town's main street. Back at camp in the late afternoon, there were several games of "horseshoes" followed by another group dinner of flame broiled steaks and corn on the cob. Later that evening we also enjoyed the traditional camp-made venison chili. Everyone was sad to see the campout end Monday afternoon.

David Nunn

Families Enjoy Teen Weekend in North Texas

On Dec. 29-30 the Dallas and Sherman, Texas, congregations hosted teens and families from East Texas, Lubbock and Wichita Falls for a weekend of fellowship and fun. Almost all of those from out of town stayed with local teen families which added depth to the fellowship opportunities for everyone.

Planned activities for the 19 teenagers included a Bible study on the Sabbath and an evening of fellow-



The Dallas teen weekend.

ship, lasagna dinner and games at the home of a local Church family. An epic Pictionary game was played out that evening between team Mayonnaise and team Miracle Whip. Several "formal and informal protests" were heard and denied from team Mayo, but they did prevail in the end with a very noisy sudden-sudden death draw-off.

A dessert contest was planned and though only two entries were made, they were both outstanding—hardly a crumb was left. Those entries were made by Sarah Leiby and Lisa Holladay, both from the Dallas congregation.

While the teens and chaperones were enjoying fellowship at one location, most of their parents and younger siblings enjoyed a wonderful "taco night" themed potluck at another family's home nearby. This allowed the parents to have their own special evening while staying close by for picking up their teens after the event.

Sunday the teens plus some parents and younger siblings enjoyed laser tag,

bowling, gravity ropes, mini-golf and arcade games at a local Main Event entertainment center. The success of the weekend was owed to the much appreciated efforts of volunteers to coordinate and help with the activities. Texas has a great group of teens and families!

Jennifer Ledbetter

Marriage Seminar in Spokane Teaches Unity In Marriage, Church

An extra special Sabbath was observed on Nov. 3, 2012, when Randy and Kay Schreiber, from Phoenix, Arizona, visited the Spokane United Church of God to present a marriage seminar.

About 100 people from the Spokane, Kennewick and Kettle Falls churches attended.

Our usual webcasted service at 1:30 p.m. was changed to 10:30 a.m. so that the seminar sessions could be held in the afternoon and evening. A catered lunch and dinner were served to feed those who attended. The choir performed during the morning service singing "Paeon of Promise" composed by Joseph Martin. The choir was directed by Steve Oliver with a flute solo by Jenny Iiams. This song is based on Genesis 12:2-3, which chronicles the covenant and promises that God made to Abraham of blessings, grace and peace.

In the sermon, Mr. Schreiber stressed the importance of a couple being

one in marriage and equated that to the Church, in which we are one with God, as Christ and God the Father are one. Being one should direct every thought and action in our lives. The marriage and family unit is no longer you and me. It is us together. Likewise, the individual members in the Church are no longer single entities but a unit. There is mutual giving in the marriage relationship and family, between the individual and God, and between members in the congregation. As Christ submitted to the Father, we need to submit to each other. We are to stick together. God hates divorce in the family, and the Church is God's family. When a Church splits, it lacks the qualities of commitment, love, nurture, trust and sacrifice. We each need to be willing to do whatever it takes to preserve our marriages and our relationships in the Church.

The sessions during the seminar focused on commitment, love (communication is a part of love), nurture, trust, and sacrifice.

Our marriages are not perfect. Our relationships in the Church and with our fellow man are not perfect, but we can keep working on these elements. Grow and never give up. If we can put these qualities to work in our families, the Church, and others with whom we come into contact, we will hear the words from Matthew 25:21: "Well done you good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Karen Allwine

Walking the Talk

Continued from page 3

works.

An example of how one can be "doing the Work of God" and failing to be ready to meet Christ at His return can involve our effective preaching of the gospel, while failing to live the life of personal service to others, which the life of Jesus exemplified. While the work of the Church involves carrying the gospel to the world, its intended purpose is to baptize people who will "observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18). Preaching the gospel is only the first step in a process involving each participant's need to also live the life associated with it. "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

It helps to remember that the Israelites were once slaves in Egypt without any option, until a lamb's blood covered their doorposts on the first Passover. When morning came they still had not moved, but they now possessed the option to follow God out of Egypt. Similarly, at baptism our past sins are removed. With the laying on of hands, God's Holy Spirit enters our hearts and minds. We haven't moved yet, rather we are given an oppor-

tunity to be fed and led by Christ to sonship through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13-17). In both cases, a journey is necessary reach the Promised Land. Merely teaching it, liking it or wanting it is not the same as making the challenging journey through Egypt and the Red Sea, or down the difficult path and through the narrow door with God.

It is through the working of our gracious God in us that we must develop the

involving the daily work of "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" while we "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

As members of the Body of Christ, we are committed to doing God's work of preaching the gospel and preparing a people. But Jesus' parables in Matthew 25 warn that we also must *do* all the things

I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:22-23)! The verses immediately following compare the *doers* of His sayings to a man who builds his house on a rock, while hearers only are building on sand. We are told, "But be *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, emphasis added).

You and I have been called to participate in an effective preaching of the gospel to others. If we are not careful we could begin to think that it's our act of preaching the gospel that is preparing us as a people in God's eyes. But the apostle Paul admonished us to also be running a spiritual race and wrestling with an evil nature, "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

As God continues to bless our efforts to teach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to others, let's be growing into bright lights and ambassadors of the way of life it represents. As God does that in us He is arraying us "in fine linen clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:8). Through a focus on becoming like our Father in heaven, we grow a confidence in our salvation accompanied with a genuine expectation of joining Christ at His return (1 John 2:28-29). **UN**

As members of the Body of Christ, we are committed to doing God's work of preaching the gospel and preparing a people. But Jesus' parables in Matthew 25 warn that we also must do all the things we teach.

fruits of the Holy Spirit for a coming harvest (John 15:1-8). We need to grow with His daily Bread "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). That results in a Bride made ready, clothed with white garments of righteousness. It's a process

we teach. Each of His lessons contains a warning for any who talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. Jesus warned: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then



What's New In MEDIA?

■ Beyond Today Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Airing Period
<i>Is This the End Time?</i>	Darris McNeely	Feb. 3-9
<i>666 and You!</i>	Steve Myers	Feb. 10-16
<i>72 Hours to Chaos</i>	Gary Petty	Feb. 17-23
<i>Christ's Second Coming: When Predictions Fail</i>	Darris McNeely	Feb. 24-March 2
<i>Christ's Second Coming: Can You Believe It?</i>	Steve Myers	March 3-9
<i>Who Is Jesus?</i>	Darris McNeely	March 10-16

■ UCG Web Presence Expands

On Feb. 4, Internet manager Aaron Booth reported the following stats for UCG Web activity:
46,748 total Facebook fans.
34,436 total Twitter followers.
1,071 videos posted on YouTube.
2,470,194 video views on YouTube.
209 Bible FAQs posted.
1,015,614 Bible FAQs views.
676 e-mail campaigns (*This Is the Way*, UCG Weekly Update, *GN* Newsletter, *WNP* E-news) sent.

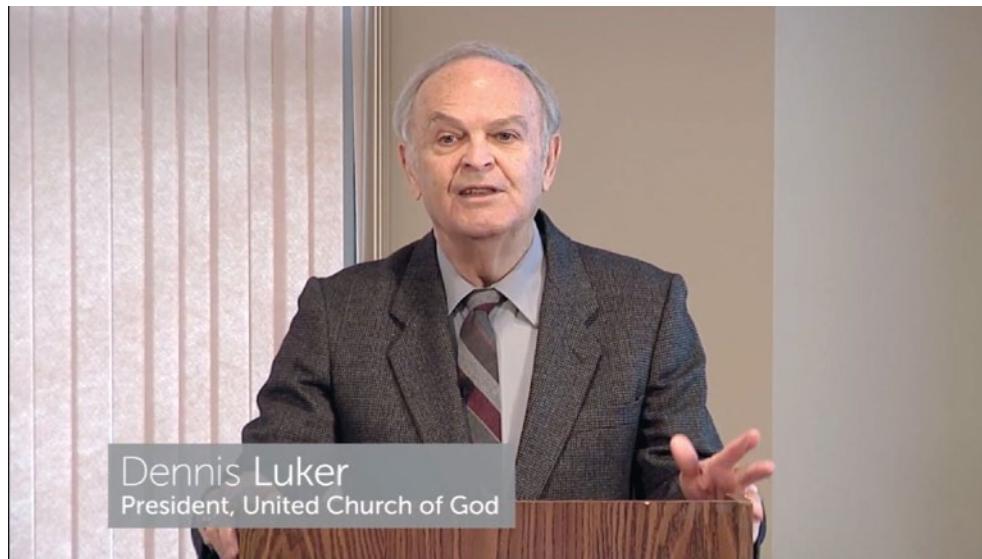
891,958 clicks to our websites generated by e-mail campaigns.
248,993 booklet downloads from Apple's iBook Store.
70,470 booklet downloads from Amazon's Kindle Store.
3,947 *Good News* iPad app downloads.

Featured Link

■ **Focus on God's Work**
<http://members.ucg.org/content/focus-gods-work>

The home office has begun a new monthly information video for the United Church of God membership titled: *Focus on God's Work*. Dennis Luker, president, asked Victor Kubik to present the inaugural video at the weekly staff meeting on Monday morning, Feb. 28. The plan is for various managers and employees to give a report about their area of responsibility that may be of particular interest to our congregations. Pastors are asked to make the video links available to our membership, and most videos will be suitable to play in the

sermonette timeslot at Sabbath services. *Focus on God's Work* has its own menu selection on the member's website under the "resources" tab at <http://members.ucg.org>. This is where a new video will be posted each month, and we'll also announce them at the continually updated Inside United: Real-time blog. Victor Kubik, the first presenter in this new series, gives an inspiring report about the United Church of God in south-central and southern Africa. The video of his presentation, including the slides he presented, is available at the URL above.



Focus on God's Work

UNITED NEWS

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Feb. 16-17:** Phoenix Women's Enrichment Weekend, Arizona
- Feb. 22-24, 2013:** Portland Ladies Retreat, Oregon
- Feb. 25-28, 2013:** Council of Elders Quarterly Meeting, Cincinnati
- March 2-4:** Cincinnati 50th Anniversary Church of God Weekend and Annual Regional Dance, Cincinnati
- March 8-10:** Cincinnati East Women's Enrichment Weekend, Ohio
- March 29-April 1:** Families For God Weekend, Minnesota
- April 12-14:** Atlanta Women's Enrichment Weekend, Georgia
- April 20:** Midwest Teen Prom, Columbus, Ohio, www.midwestteenprom.com

14TH ANNUAL UCG SOUTHEAST REGIONAL PROM

Everyone ages 12-25 is invited! This year's event will be held at the Baird Chapel of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, on March 30, from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/14SE-regionalprom> for full details!

REGISTRATION

The deadline to register is March 10, 2013. The fee is \$15 per person (max. of \$35 per family). After the deadline, the fee will increase to \$20 per person (max. of \$45 per family). Be sure to mail your registration form with your check. Click for Registration Form: <http://tinyurl.com/14SE-prom-pdf>. This form will also be made available through the Facebook group under the files tab. Please make checks out to United Church of God—Tennessee. You can mail your payment to Regina Horvath, 805 Murfreesboro Road, Franklin, TN 37067.

For questions about registration, please email UCGsoutheastprom@gmail.com or call Mandy Kellers at 615-415-5774. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/14SE-regionalprom> for full details!

UNITED STATISTICS

Beyond Today Responses

Monthly Totals, Jan. 2011-12 vs. 2012-13.

Includes phone, Website, Yahoo ads, Google ads and "snail mail" responses

