Elders Credentialed and Ordained

Leroy Neff was credentialed as an elder in the United Church of God during the December Council meetings. He and his wife, Maxine, serve in the East Texas, Texas, congregation. On Dec. 31, Jonathan Pinelli was ordained an elder. He and his wife, Deborah, serve in the Cincinnati East AM congregation. Jim Cowell was ordained an elder on Jan. 7. He and his wife, Marlene, serve the San Diego, California, congregation.

GN Subscriptions Continue to Rise

The total print quantity of the January-February 2006 Good News magazine was 401,231. While this is less than our highest print run of 526,173 reached for the September-October 2002 issue, there is an encouraging trend—the number of actual “subscribers” is continuing to rise. Over the past three years, we have made a concerted effort in the United States, where we have added all new subscribers to the program and newsstand program.

ABC Orientation Launches Largest Class

ABC welcomed 53 students with orientation and a reception Jan. 8 (photos by Janet Treadway) by Gary Antion

Amidst fish swimming in fishbowls and beautiful décor in the dining area, the seventh class to attend Ambassador Bible Center enjoyed this year’s orientation on Jan. 8. Coming from seven international areas and the United States, the class of 2006 gathered for the first time at the home office for the seventh ABC orientation.

The theme for this year’s class is “Preparing to Serve and Lead.” After David Johnson opened the afternoon with prayer, David Register emceed the proceedings and presented information from the overall program to the 53 students who were present. Gary Antion and Ralph Levy presented information from their areas of responsibility to help the students become acquainted with ABC.

Four students, Joy Porter (2002), Mark Holladay (2003), Peter Eddington (2004), and Arnold Hampton and Dave Baker (2005), served as the class mentors.

Beyond Today Program Gathering Momentum

■ Program scheduled for 124 TV channels and growing.

In early January a “DVD sampler” of the first four Beyond Today video programs was mailed to all pastors. Enclosed was a letter from Clyde Kilough requesting pastors to show some of the programs to their congregations. A second document was also enclosed that outlined how U.S. members can work on getting the program on cable-access TV channels in their own town or city. On Jan. 11 and 12 four more Beyond Today video programs were recorded in the new media center, with Darris McNeely hosting. This brought our total to 12 programs. To date, 124 local community cable TV channels across the United States are signed up to air the program, plus our presence on the World Wide Web is gaining momentum. See the article on page 2 for more details.

In the United States, if you are interested in hosting the program on your local town’s community-access TV station, please contact John LaBissoniere at john.labissoniere@ucg.org or by telephone at (888) 369-9940.

Our multimedia Web site, which hosts these programs, is adding more content each week at www.beyondtoday.tv. You can presently view material from the first eight programs. Be sure to visit and watch the video clips! You can view broadband, high-quality clips, plus download dial-up versions if you have a slower Internet connection. QuickTime files are also available for download to video iPods so that Beyond Today can be viewed away from your computer.

Please continue to pray for the men and women involved in production of our media efforts that God may grant us the ability to effectively reach this world with the good news of His Kingdom.

Peter Eddington

Beyond Today Listed on Google Video

■ United gets in on the ground floor of a new video search feature to promote the Beyond Today program.

by Aaron Booth

The popular online search tool, Google, offers a new video search feature where registered users can upload videos to the Google video Web site. This free service allows visitors to search for posted videos and either view them online or download them.

Currently, we have eight Beyond Today TV programs posted on the Google video Web site. In just a few weeks, these programs have been viewed over 1,500 times. The most popular—“Is There Life After Death?”—has generated over 1,000 views.

Thanks to this new feature from Google, we are able to reach more people online with the Beyond Today TV program than we would just from the beyondtoday.tv Web site. un

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Beyond Today Site Visitors and Program Response Reported

Overall, the first two months of activity at the Beyond Today site, www.beyondtoday.tv, went very well. We had 4,844 visitors to the site in December of 2005, and then a very healthy increase to 13,115 for January of 2006. During January, 132 gigabytes of material was streamed to our visitors. This amount of bandwidth usage is much higher than at either www.ucg.org (35.3 gigabytes) or www.gnmagazine.org (65.6 gigabytes). This is, of course, due to the larger streaming video files found primarily at our Beyond Today site.

Beyond Today is scheduled to air on 124 channels at present. However, many of these channels are still working through the transition from airing our previous Tomorrow program and Good News TV program. One early survey to our sponsors showed that only about half of the stations are actually up and running with our new program.

We expect that February will continue to show a steady increase once again as more stations come on board with the new program.

So far, overall response to Unite'd s new video effort has been very positive. Some helpful suggestions have been received from some of our members, and so we plan to incorporate new ideas and features to improve the technical quality and, most of all, the content, of Beyond Today.

Peter Eddington

Mission Statement: The mission of the Church of God is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all ways, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples. President: Clyde Kilough

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Clyde Kilough (secretary), Darris McNeely (Vice President), Clay Thorn-
Senior Pastor Visits East Africa

John Elliott, senior pastor for East Africa and pastor of the Phoenix East and Yuma, Arizona, congregations, along with Monte Knudson spent three weeks visiting congregations in Africa in late January and early February. Their route took them through Johannesburg, South Africa, where they visited Bill and Cheryl Jahns.

“It was very helpful to both of us to share insights and experiences in serving God’s churches on this continent,” said Mr. Elliott in an e-mail from Kenya Jan. 28.

Meeting With Leaders

Their subsequent tour through East Africa included a two-day leadership conference focused on principles of Christ-centered leadership developed by the Godly Leadership task force. Additional discussions involved maturing phases that the work of God is passing through there.

“A deeper bonding among the leadership was a goal that was reached through applying many scriptural directives,” said Mr. Elliott. “Assignments were adjusted to enable 29 congregations to share insights and experiences in serving God’s churches on this continent.”

Adults and children were served at the seminars with a breakfast, buffet lunch and dinner each day.

Visiting 10 Congregations

The tour also included holding Bible studies and Sabbath services at the Kenyan congregations of Nairobi, Migori, Kisii, Ochuma Nyahera, Kosele and Maidiani as well as Tanzanian congregations of Utegi and Nyanjage.

Two baptisms took place the weekend of Jan. 26 following close behind the 17 who were baptized during the Feast of Tabernacles. Precounseling for baptism is performed by the congregation leaders, who “refer them to me when fruits of repentance are becoming evident,” Mr. Elliott said. “The result is that most whom I counsel are already hearing or are ready for baptism. The two men baptized this time each traveled to meet me from distant towns that were not on our route of travel.”

Interested New Group

Mr. Elliott also visited a very eager group of people at Ochuma Nyahera who are already very committed to the teachings of UCG.

“Knowing that our local leader in their area, David Ogweno Owak, had visited them on only three Sabbaths previously, I had not expected the depth of understanding or biblical knowledge they have,” Mr. Elliott said. “Their questions revealed their broad understanding of the Bible and our literature but they wished to better understand certain passages, such as in Acts 19 where some apparently received the Holy Spirit before being baptized. Afterwards we were thankful to have squeezed the meeting with them into our already busy day visiting brethren at distant Got Kachola on the shore of Lake Victoria.”

Several other new groups of very committed people are meeting every Sabbath in the Sokita area of Kenya.

Dealing With Famine

The famine continues to plague East Africa since little or no rain has fallen since the Feast. Some areas have had nothing for people or their grazing herds, prompting President Kiduko to ask residents in the capital city, Nairobi, to open their private yards to herdsmen who have driven their herds of livestock there.

The Good Works program has provided funding for emergency grain and water-filtering equipment for the members who have little to eat and no remaining sources of clean water. “We have already begun the process of purchasing and distributing grain to them,” said Mr. Elliott. “Now that we have two church buildings completed, we will be able to begin purchasing such grain during harvest season at low prices and storing it for emergency use in the future.”

“In addition, the church properties will begin to be developed as agricultural plots for the use of our widows and orphans living nearby. David Ogwen has readily accepted the oversight of the project at Migori with the eager assistance of his wife, Damarius,” said Mr. Elliott.

Canada Digs Into Its Database

In December the Canadian office staff began sending letters to those on the database who are not currently receiving The Good News magazine.

There were 5,223 people in that category. At the end of January, 283 had responded.

They are being sent a letter along with one of the four brochures offering different booklets and a subscription to The Good News. Your prayers for the success of this effort are appreciated. It is one way of contacting those who have been sent literature in the past, and it is basically a free way to develop our subscriber list.

We also sent letters in January to those who have not renewed the Bible Study Course, and also plan to write to those who did not respond to the two GN renewal letters sent in mid and late 2004.

Edwin van Pelt

Feast of Tabernacles Tour Announced

Details of the custom-designed 2006 Feast of Tabernacles tour in Turkey were announced in UCG services Jan. 14 and 21. From Istanbul, Feastsogoers will fly to Izmir (formerly known as Smyrna), where a tour of six of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 will begin.

“This tour will be highly educational, focusing on biblical geography, the travels of Paul, early Christian congregations and the life and culture of the early Church,” said Charles McElear, Festival planner.

A package price of $2,975 includes round-trip airfare from New York. More details can be found on the Web at www.ucg.org/feast.

Chichewa-Speaker Baptized

Bill Jahns reported that Gladstone Chonde, an elder in Malawi, baptized the first member in UCG who speaks only the Chichewa language. United started translating the sermons into Chichewa about a year ago (since many of the women speak only Chichewa).

British Isles Ministers Meet

The ministry of United Church of God—British Isles met in Polesworth on Sunday, Dec. 4, for what proved to be a very profitable and productive meeting. A key item on the agenda was to discuss the most effective way to help prospective members who live too far away from regular services.

There was also an announcement of the year’s Feast of Tabernacles tour in Winchester and discussion on next year’s site, York.
Speeches a Highlight of Summer Camp in Chile

Once again we had the summer camp for the youth in the southern part of South America in Paine, Chile. Paine is a small town located only 30 miles south of the city of Santiago, but the facilities we have for camp are so isolated from the city that nobody could imagine we were so close.

The facility for camp is just what we need. No doubt it is a blessing from God. It has cabins, pools, courts for the most popular sports and swimming pools for all ages.

This year we began camp Dec. 23 and finished the 29th. Every year we choose these dates for several reasons, including to isolate our youth from the feasts of this world celebrated during that time. We can also get very affordable prices due to the lack of demand during that season.

This year we had a total of 90 people attending, of which 82 were campers, mostly from Chile, but we also had campers from Bolivia, Argentina and the United States.

Due to the economic problems faced by most of our families, the Church makes the effort to pay for most of the expenses of camp. Campers pay for a small percentage of camp and their transportation. The cost of transportation makes it difficult for the youth from Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil to attend, even though they would very much like to be with the rest of the Church youth.

On the Sabbath we had services and a Bible study given by our ministers.

Camper Speeches

In the afternoon of that Sabbath five of the campers presented the first set of speeches. In fact, every day of camp there was a set of camper speeches. These speeches were one of the highlights of the camp. In those speeches the campers were asked to speak for about 10 minutes each on a subject of their choosing.

This year all of the speeches reflected one common subject: They all want to stay in the Church and become baptized someday in order to be protected from the behavior of this world and become children of God. All of the speeches were very inspiring. These speeches are very good for several reasons:

1. They allow the campers to express themselves without being criticized or laughed at.
2. The campers themselves are able to teach each other in their own language, experience and age.
3. They allow the minister to get to know the campers better and, through that, the minister gets to know the subjects that are in the minds of the youth in order to help them more effectively.
4. When they speak to their peers about a given subject, they commit themselves to support their speech with their example.

Christian Living and Activities

Every day the campers had a Christian Living class given by one of the ministers. They also had an hour called “Remember your Creator.” In that hour they prayed, studied their Bibles, talked about the Christian Living class or prepared their speech. After lunch there was swimming and sports such as soccer, basketball and volleyball.

After dinner they had an activity such as dancing, a talent show, organized games, etc.

The camp went by very fast. Fortunately all of the campers went back to the city of Santiago to participate in a church family day Jan. 1. That rounded out the very wonderful time for the youth to be together.

At the end of camp, the campers all became more united than ever. They are very thankful to God for providing the means to have the summer camps and other activities for the youth in order to prepare them for the future of the Church and for the Kingdom of God.

Saul Langarica

20 Campers Enjoy Sea and Gorge at South African Camp

The 2005 South African Summer Youth Camp was held from Sunday, Dec. 4, to Sunday, Dec. 11, 2005, at the Glenmore Eco-Centre on the Kwa-Zulu Natal south coast.

Twenty campers and three counsellors from all parts of South Africa experienced a fun-filled week of adventure and beach activities such as sea kayaking, surf rafting, mountain biking, abseiling, rappelling, wall climbing, archery, team building and survivor obstacle courses.

Campers came from Cape Town, East London, Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa, and this year we were fortunate to have one camper from Zambia and one counsellor from Zimbabwe. Bill and Cheryl Jahns (minister and his wife from Johannesburg congregation) and Neil Becker (minister from the East London congregation) administered the Christian education classes. Grant Chick and his wife, Kim, members from the Durban congregation, served as camp director.

One of the highlights of this year’s camp was the overnight excursion to the top of the Umtamvuna Gorge where the campers slept in tents, cooked their own dinners and breakfasts, abseiled, canyoned and mountain biked. As it is prone to do when you are camping, it rained, but spirits certainly were not dampened at all.

Sabbath services were held during camp. Local members joined the campers and staff for services. Songs were led by Neil Becker and split sermons were given by Bill Jahns and Grant Chick. The services were made special with special music performed by the campers.

The last evening together was spent presenting campers with awards for achievements and showing photos taken during camp, which the campers thoroughly enjoyed.

Plans are already being made for camp in 2006, and we would welcome any prospective campers or staff from overseas who would like to join us.

Grant Chick

Sports, speeches, classes and activities all contributed to the unity the campers felt at the end of the camp in Chile.

Activities from abseiling to surf rafting to sea kayaking make the camp in Southern Africa fun. Particular activities, including abseiling and wall climbing, are especially popular with campers.
54 Attend Australian Summer Camp 2005

The Australian summer camp drew 54 campers, including four from New Zealand, to the new site at the Wambanoo Adventure Centre about an hour south of Sydney.

Camp was held from Dec. 23 until Jan. 1. The campers were served by 18 staff members, including Evan Manning from Canada and Ricardo Villanueva from Mexico.

Most felt that the open spaces and being away from suburbia was a plus for this camp. It was a friendly camp with everyone “waving” to each other (well, some call it the Aussie salute) because of the very friendly and sticky flies.

Relationships and Activities

The typical camp day began with breakfast and a 35-minute Christian Living class. This year’s theme was relationships, including with God as our personal Father and with Jesus as our older Brother. Other classes showed that a righteous man chooses friends carefully and showed what it means to be your brother’s keeper. We also had three dating seminars for the older campers.

Campers were divided into four teams of mixed ages to do activities during the day. The day was divided up into four periods with an hour and a half break in the middle of the day to eat lunch, play pool or foosball (table soccer) or just hang out with friends.

Activities included a low ropes course, volleyball, touch rugby football, public speaking workshops, dance classes, canoeing, orienteering, crafts (where the campers made toys for disabled children) and archery.

The annual speech banquet and volleyball were just two of the many activities at the camp in Australia. The screams all over camp. The “girlish” scream was by our oldest boy camper from Mackay... we know who you were.

Several of the teams also attempted the milk crate building challenge. Each camper tried to build a tower straight up made of milk crates. As they went higher, another camper would throw up the next milk crate. The Wambanoo Camp’s record is 21 crates high and two girls, Penny McQueen, from Victoria and Denielle Tearle, from Queensland, both climbed to 18 crates.

We had a special sports challenge this year. The New Zealand campers and some from New South Wales who had New Zealand parents challenged the rest of the world to a “serious” game of touch rugby. The game began with a haka (a war cry New Zealand teams use to put fear in the other team) led by Paul Marshall, from Sydney. The game was close but “unfortunately” the New Zealand team won... again.

Drugs, body image and relaxation exercises as they visualized their goals for the future. On Wednesday and Thursday the Outreach Adventure staff came in to supervise the challenge activities. This was tiring and challenging, especially for those who were not very good with heights. All the campers did very well, and there were some great examples of perseverance and trying things that were hard and scary.

Campers rode on a 150-meter (almost 500-foot) flying fox, scrambled up a vertical climbing playpen, worked around a series of challenges on the high ropes and, the favorite of all, experienced the giant swing. The campers were pulled up by their team, and then they released a type of rip cord and swung through the air. You could hear the screams all over camp. The “girlish” scream was by our oldest boy camper from Mackay... we know who you were.

The request was granted.

Letters

“Considering Counseling for Baptism?”

[In the article “Considering Counseling for Baptism? What Are You Waiting For?” in the December 2005 issue, it asked] “Do you believe with every fiber of your being...? When I was baptized, and when I baptized others, I was not asked, and I did not ask others, if they believed with “every fiber of their being.” That statement is almost contrived—almost worked up. Now after 34 years in God’s Church, I can calmly and deliberately say to almost anyone, “I believe Jesus Christ is God and my Savior with every fiber of my being.” But when I was counseling for baptism, I wanted to believe and asked, and after it was shown to me, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

The article wasn’t bad or wrong, but was it real? California

“From Disillusionment to Delighted”

I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God for quite a long time—observing the festivals of God as He ordained. The Feast of Tabernacles—which was observed in Jesus’ time and mentioned in Zechariah that it will be observed after the second coming of Christ—should obviously be observed in the intervening time also. I would like to know your plans for it.

I continue to be a Sabbath-keeper. California

“Welcome Home”

Thank you so much for a thoughtful, thorough and—most important—a caring response to my question. I’m also pleased to report that I will be attending Sabbath services regularly. Not having a car right now, I had to use public transportation to get there, so I arrived after services, during the fellowship period. However, as I had expected, the brethren immediately demonstrated the love of Christ. More than once, someone said to me, “Welcome home!” They even took me out to dinner, and someone arranged transportation for me to next week’s services. I am truly thankful to our heavenly Father for being merciful to me as I struggled all these years with doctrinal changes and not wanting to be “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.” He gave me time to “prove all things” again. It was through the sound doctrine found in the UCG media that the gray areas were cleared up for me. This is where the work of God is, and I can support it with my tithes and offerings, confident that I’m being a good steward of what God has entrusted to me (I just finished listening to Mr. Kilough’s sermon, “Entrusted With the Gospel”). Again, thank you, and I love you all with the love of Christ! Internet

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Snow and “the Zone” Descend Upon Winter Camp

Campers had been hoping for snow in time for Winter Camp, and snow they got! The 11th annual Winter Camp began on Dec. 21 and ended Dec. 26. Campers from 13 states enjoyed the winter activities of tubing and cross-country skiing. The 48 campers and 33 staff members enjoyed five days together building bonds and learning more about God’s way of life.

Relationships were emphasized in daily Compass Check Christian Living classes. Topics included “Inclusiveness in our Relationships” by Steve Nutzman and “Words That Hurt and Words That Help” by Victor Kubik. Dawn Familetti conducted a class for the young ladies on “Growing From Girlhood to a Feminine Woman.” Gary Black spoke to the young men on the topic of “Ambition.”

Special guests were Vic and Beverly Kubik, who instructed in indoor team challenge. A lively question-and-answer session allowed the campers to ask questions about the Bible and practical situations in life. Daily dorm inspections encouraged campers to keep their dorm rooms and personal items clean and neat.

Dance class helped the campers to learn new dance steps that they displayed at the dance on the last night. Other activities included floor hockey, basketball, volleyball, outdoor team challenge, snow football, open game night and arts and crafts.

The camp activities and classes are designed to assist campers in their spiritual and emotional growth. One camper wrote that camp “has helped me develop more self-confidence and has brought my spirits up.” Another camper wrote, “Camp gave me new friends and a new attitude on life for a new perspective.”

The dedicated camp staff generously gave of their time and talents to these future leaders. And for that, we offer our deep thanks for a job well done.

After directing Winter Camp for nine years from 1997 to 2005, Steve Nutzman is retiring from his duties as camp director. Overall United Youth Camp coordinator Larry Greider has asked him to help with ACA accreditation this summer. Former Winter Camp assistant director Gary Black will now be the camp director of Winter Camp.

What does camp mean to the youth?

Winter Campers enjoy the snow with cross-country skiing and snowballs; upper right, part of the indoor challenge class—the guys have to figure out how to raise themselves up as a unit without falling over.

Three campers responded this way: “To help develop godly character and work on relationships (human to human and God relationships).”

Steve Nutzman

Young Adults Learn Service, Leadership at Challenger II

Thirteen young adults from seven states and Germany gathered in southern Arizona from Dec. 25 to Jan. 1 to participate in the Challenger II Rock Climbing program. We were blessed with excellent weather—cool nights and warm days—as we camped in the desert, climbed in the mountains and talked about leadership, responsibility and personal growth at the campfire at night.

Climbers’ skill level ranged from experienced mountaineering to amateur, but all formed a solid team based on friendship and encouragement. The program emphasized challenging each individual to greater spiritual growth and leadership. Following is one participant’s report—James Capo, director.

by Caleb J. anicich, with Andrew Beattie

As a poor college student needing to earn money over the winter break, I hesitated about attending this camp. I knew the program had a focus on leadership and challenge, but it was a letter from Mr. Capo that convinced me the lessons I could learn from attending—lessons that would benefit me for a lifetime—would be much more valuable than the little bit of money I could earn in a week. So I decided to go.

Before camp, I had started to question my role in the Church. I know that sometimes young people feel like they don’t really have a role in their congregation, and this is an attitude and perception that needs to change. The camp placed an emphasis on servant leadership, and how as a group we need to accept ownership and responsibility in the Church. Now, at this very moment, young adults can help lead the Church in the right direction, not through positions or appointments or ordination, but through our willingness to serve and get involved. I believe this applies to everyone, not just to the young adults.

The Church of God is a family and a body. We are made up of many members, and we all have different abilities, skills and areas where we can serve. Having recently moved to a new church area, I had been waiting around for someone to ask me to do something.

What this camp helped me see is that we do not need to wait to be given a job or position, but rather we need to find existing places where we might be able to serve, and then eagerly fill in where needed. This may be as simple as helping with coffee, greeting an unfamiliar face with a smile and a handshake or visiting the shut-ins or elderly.

An inspiring spiritual focus of the camp was on the correlation between rock climbing and our spiritual climb toward the Kingdom of God. Continual focus was placed on the overall camp theme: conviction, commitment and courage. In rock climbing you need to have a conviction of purpose and desire to climb, commitment to that conviction and the courage to continually advance on your climb.

In climbing, if you don’t go for the next move, you will get burned out. Your arms and legs start to burn, and eventually you fall off the rock. The same thing can happen in our spiritual lives when we are trying to move forward. Sometimes we don’t “trust the rock”—the next move looks a little scary, so we just sit in one spot waiting for a better hold, and we burn out. In our spiritual lives, we must have the courage to move forward even when the going is tough. Trust the rock, and commit to the move.

Sometimes going up to meet someone is scary. Sometimes raising your hand when the minister asks for volunteers is scary. But if we can take courage in the support of our brothers and the support from our great God, and volunteer, then we have taken the first step in truly becoming servant leaders.

Another lesson was that we need to learn how to make our holds/trials positive. In climbing and in life, we can encounter an overhang, a crack or a bump in the rock, and we have to make a nonnegative move to make that hold “positive.” We might have to lie back, “undercling” or “crimp” (a way to hold on to even tiny ledges).

These are all things that we don’t do naturally. They are deliberate and forced actions, but they enable us to hang on and move up. We must trust that the rock will hold us, and have confidence that our belayer will catch us if we do fall.

This camp was meant to change our lives, and it showed me that all of our thoughts and attitudes can each lead to and serve is now. We learned servant leadership, unity and “tie in” with those we can trust who are helping us spiritually. Challenger II also taught us that part of our responsibility in the family of God is to “be there” for God and each other, that we can each delay our brothers and sisters in Christ, to continually help each other toward our final goal, the Kingdom of God.

Each participant is now planning a service project in his or her local congregation to begin acting on the lessons learned in this program, and I encourage other young adults in the Church to step into their own service roles.
“Quality Time” With Your Kids

We’ve all heard the term. It’s bandied about as the magic, fix-all solution for busy parents with children. Is this true? If so, how can you insure the time you spend with your children truly is “quality time”?

by David Trebig

“I’m really looking forward to spending some quality time with Dad this weekend,” said 6-year-old Bill to his same-age friend, Joe. “Yeah, me too!” exclaimed Joe. “Even though I haven’t really talked to my dad in a month, some good quality time this coming Sunday will fix everything. It will be like we’ve been together every day.”

Whoa! What planet is this conversation taking place upon? Are these kids human? Everyone knows this isn’t reality. Young children don’t talk about spending “quality time” with their parents. For them, all time spent with their parents is important, and they don’t generally rate how good (or bad) their time with their parent or parents was. As children mature, however, they do understand whether the time spent with their parents was enjoyable or not.

Consider the case of 16-year-old Susan. She hasn’t had a meaningful conversation with her parents for months, but her folks promised they’d spend some quality time with her on the way home by going to a movie or something.

“Oh no,” thought Susan. “Just what I need: an embarrassing trip to the movies with my folks followed by an inquisition about my friends. What a nightmare!”

From her parents’ perspective, the outing may have been a nightmare for them, as well. Unfortunately, this hypothetical example is reality for many young people and their parents.

today, the concept of spending “quality time” with children has permeated discussions about parenting. For busy parents who are juggling demanding careers and heavy workloads with raising children, “quality time” has become an important concept.

It’s easy to understand why. Studies now indicate that the typical amount of time a working parent spends with his or her young children is about 30 minutes per day. And this amount of time diminishes as children mature. A typical father will spend less than three minutes per day alone with a child who has reached his or her teenage years... No wonder parents want to make the small amounts of time they spend with their children as good as possible.

We’ve all heard the term. It’s bandied about as the magic, fix-all solution for busy parents with children. Is this true? If so, how can you insure the time you spend with your children truly is “quality time”?

Defining “Quality Time”

Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo, in their Let the Children Come Along the Virtuous Way parenting program, define quality time as “an activity that promotes communicating and sharing” (Leader's Guide, p. 79).

According to this definition, many activities such as going to a movie or playing games are not really quality time. In fact, the Ezzos “challenge the contemporary notion of quality time and quantity time with the view that time is not the best measurement, but the caliber of relationships is. This can be gauged by how often children turn to Dad for advice and counseling” (Leader’s Guide, p. 91).

The goal in spending time with children is to promote and facilitate a deep, heart-to-heart relationship. These kinds of relationships are characterized by a child revealing his or her innermost thoughts, ambitions and even worries.

When this occurs, it is like being allowed into a special, private place that is located behind closed doors. Being invited in requires trust. And adults have to be sensitive to and respectful of a child’s vulnerability and their parents’ wishes.

Studies now indicate that the typical amount of time a working parent spends with his or her young children is about 30 minutes per day. And this amount of time diminishes as children mature. A typical father will spend less than three minutes per day alone with a child who has reached his or her teenage years... No wonder parents want to make the small amounts of time they spend with their children as good as possible.

when they are invited in or they won’t be allowed to return.

It’s at this intimate level of heart-to-heart communication that a parent can be most influential in teaching both physical and spiritual concepts. Before offering advice, a wise parent will have abundantly paved the way to this position through love and concern for the child. It’s much easier for children to hear a parent when they know the parent loves them, treats them with respect and goes out of his or her way to do things for them.

Sometimes parents have to prime the pump for meaningful conversation with their children by first spending time with their children doing things they like to do. As a result of this personal interest, children often open up and share what they are thinking. Good discussions can’t always be just ordered up. They must be natural, and they come about because a good relationship already exists.

Some parents have found that they can have good heart-to-heart communication with their younger children when they put them in bed for the night. At this time it is easier to have a quiet, reflective conversation about the good things they did that day and about how God is pleased and we are blessed when we obey Him.

Teenagers can also be reflective and desirous of talking about their futures with their parents just before going to bed. While the temptation may be for parents to say, “I’m in tired. Let’s talk about this in the morning,” teens may not be as ready for the conversation at a later time. It’s often better for parents to take advantage of the time spent with teens want to talk, if they can do so.

Quantity Is Important Too

It’s also important to understand that the quantity of time spent with children is not irrelevant. One good experience with a child is easily cancelled by weeks and months of neglect. Perhaps it is best said that quality and quantity of time spent with children are both important.

In principle, we all understand that our time is our life. When we give some of our time to our children, we are telling them that they are important to us. We have a quiet, reflective conversation with them about the good things they did that day. We may have a quiet, reflective conversation with them about the good things they did that day, we have a quiet, reflective conversation with them about the good things they did that day.

You’re in, Now What?

Before closing, let’s assume you’ve established a good relationship with your child—you’ve been invited into his or her private world. You are truly experiencing the best “quality time” possible with your child as he or she opens up with his or her innermost thoughts and feelings.

Now what are you going to say? How can you make sure you’ll be invited to return to this level of communication? Here are a few points to consider:

• Offer praise. Praise the young person for his or her willingness to discuss things on this level. This type of communication is special. Let your child know you enjoy and appreciate being able to talk about things with him or her on this level.

• Reaffirm your love. If you hope to influence your children, they will likely be influenced to the degree that they know they are loved.

• Suggest a course of action based on God’s Word. Be a salesperson for a godly course of action. God told the ancient Israelites to tell their children how following Him had benefited them. In short, we should explain that doing things God’s way is “for our good always” (Deuteronomy 6:20-25) and that it will be for our children’s good as well if they likewise choose God’s way.

• Let your child take ownership. Encourage, but don’t force, your child to choose God’s way. This is especially important as a child grows older. It shows respect for the child’s right and responsibility to make his or her own decisions.

• Let your child know you’d like to discuss this again. Sometimes children can get the idea that there can be no further discussion. If a child is leaning toward an unwise decision, you might ask a child to think about some questions or to do further research on a possible course of action. Suggest that you continue the conversation when you’ve both had more time to gather information and think about the possible courses of action.

• Express confidence in your child’s ability to make good decisions. Children often live up to our expectations of them. Express confidence in them, showing that you believe as they mature they will follow God, stay in the Church, be baptized, marry someone within the faith and eventually raise children who also make godly choices. Tell them this is what you foresee them doing because you know they will be happy if they make these choices.

Quality time spent with our children is one of the great joys of life. Use these tips to have more of it and to influence your offspring to follow God’s way of life.
Philippine Youth Essay Contest: What Would You Do to Stir Up Zeal and Urgency?

Last year the Church in the Philippines sponsored an essay contest for youth, ages 13 to 19, based on the question posed during Cyrus Kilgore’s May 14 sermon: “What would you do to stir up zeal and a sense of urgency in the Church?”

A panel of judges composed of the Philippine National Council (including regional pastors David Baker and all the Philippine ministry) judged the entries without knowing who wrote them. Cash prizes were awarded to the Gold, Silver and Bronze Level winners, along with four consolation prizes to Stella Mae B. Cang bah, Saraine Gem Nagtalong, Jonathan Sagayo and Tertol B. Cahibay. The Gold Level Award essay is print-ed below, along with excerpts from the Silver and Bronze Level Award essays. The full essays can be found at www.ucg.org.ph/youth/contest.

Gold Level Award: Beyond Expectations

by Aunell Ross
R. Angcos, 15, Manila

The world is not becoming better. If we are feeling its hostility against us today, expect to have more of it tomorrow. We Christians, as part of the 21st century Church, are commissioned to carry out the hostil- ity world and expound the hope and warning from God and also to prepare a people such as ourselves who have the potential to be other wise people. We are expected to carry that baton of responsibility through the most difficult time in history—the end time. But the question is, Are we capable of ful-filling that responsibility?

Our persecuted and martyred brethen had one thing in common. They had zeal. They had that powerful force that had one thing in common. They had that powerful force. They had something in common. They had that powerful force. They had something in common. They had that powerful force.

“What would you do to stir up zeal and a sense of urgency in the Church?”

“Action speaks louder than words.” If I want to be a great example, I should go first and start at the basics of my life. As Paul commands young 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).

In My Word

This has to do with saying and not saying. The not saying part is the basic part of it. It has something to do with gossip, idle expressions, bad words and more in different forms and ways. But saying truthful, edifying words, we must pursue! To stir up zeal I must always initiate the talk about the things that would spiritually recharge us especially during our fellow担ship. With the tendency to deviate from what is the “proper conversation” for the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13), I should always bear in mind that God is in our midst, listen- ing and writing a book of remem- brance, as we meditate on His name (Malachi 3:16).

Another point is in terms of talking with the people in the world. We have a common weakness to conform to the world especially on the way it speaks. Yes, we are in the world but we are not of it! As true Christians, we should not allow ourselves to be negatively influ- enced by people around us but, if possible, we should practice leadership in influencing them towards the right side and not us being influenced towards the wrong side.

In My Conduct

Our conduct should always be honor- able and worthy of the gospel of Christ. If I see someone dropping a piece of trash, I should pick it up and then, when I start working first within me because what is seen in me is coming from what is inside me. As an ambas- sador of God, I should always bear in mind that I am representing God’s name to the world; and if I am not careful with my conduct, I might blaspheme His name to the unbelievers. I can effective- ly preach God to them and expound His warning if they see that I live it.

In My Love

The perfect definition of true love is the way of give. But we should also watch our attitude in doing this. To be an example in my love I should not only focus on serving and giving, but I should carefully watch my attitude. Am I loving and serving others to serve myself? Or am I doing this just because God first loved me and I am just merely responding to that love through others? I know it is impossible for us humans to love uncondi- tionally if we haven’t felt loved like that. I know I need God’s love for us and the sacrifice that serves as an evidence to that. It is just a matter of how we recognize that love, how we value it and how we act it!

In My Spirit

Since I am not yet baptized, I should be vigilant enough to guard myself from being spiritually passive. I may find it a reason for compromising what I believe in. I should always instill in my mind that even though I am not yet baptized, I am not exempted from the application of the things I know. True Christianity is not measured on rituals alone. It is mea- sured on how each individual fulfills his or her commitment to God made during that process. Even though I may not yet have that “portfolio” of baptism, I can inspire others, even the baptized ones, to be more zealous by provoking them through the example of spirituality at my young age by actively using the Holy Spirit that is with me through my sanctifi- cation.

In My Faith

Faith has two sides—first the knowl- edge, and then the translation of that knowledge into action. Since I am still young, I lack much wisdom and under- standing. So I should keep on learning more. I know that many challenges and trials await me in this arena of powers. I should prepare for it now.

Young as I am, I should not be proud of the wisdom of the Ages as written in the Bible and, as much as possible, learn from it. Application should always follow to make my faith valid. I can be an exam- ple in my faith by doing the things that are right and proper and shunning the things that are ungodly amidst all the pressure, always bearing in mind God’s awesome promises. I should always under- stand that life is full of choices and it is just a matter of prioritizing.

I should dig into the Wisdom of the Kingdome of the Heavens. (Matthew 6:33). God has brought me into a situation where people are complacent and lethargic, that was the time when I learned the real meaning of true love and selflessness.

I am a person who almost fell into the pit of discouragement when I saw brethren who did not do things that are godly and edifying. I almost lost my enthusiasm when I saw brethren who were complacent! In my thoughts, I was already judging others for not being a light to the world, not realizing that I myself was already casting darkness by the mere act of accusing them! It was God who eventually rescued me. He made me realize that I was very busy try- ing to remove the speck from my broth- ers’ eye instead of removing that plank from my own! God made me realize that selflessness was eating me up.

I ran to God and asked for His help and forgiveness. That was the time that I committted my life to Him. By that time, my outlook in life became different. I was not being complacent! In my thoughts, I was already judging others for not being a light to the world, not realizing that I myself was already casting darkness by the mere act of accusing them! It was God who eventually rescued me. He made me realize that I was very busy try- ing to remove the speck from my broth- ers’ eye instead of removing that plank from my own! God made me realize that selflessness was eating me up.

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Kicking the Worry Habit

Worry is a bad habit—like smoking. So I have found a substitute for it that I will share for all my fellow worrywarts. Each day I take a scripture out of Psalms or Proverbs and mull it over all day long—when I am driving to the grocery store or when I catch myself starting to worry.

Yesterday’s example is a good one to show you what I mean. Psalm 5:8 says, “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of Your enemies; make Your way straight before my face.”

As I mulled this over on the way to the swimming pool, I realized that I have no enemies, so I could eliminate that part—but not until I gave thanks to God for making my life enemy-free. Then the verse said only, “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness; make Your way straight before my face.”

On the way home from the swimming pool, I realized that meant the same thing as straight before my eyes. Then the verse began to impact me as a prayer I should pray. I now paraphrase it like this: “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness and set it in front of my face so I cannot miss seeing it.”

This works for me and keeps me from worrying myself into an early grave.

Nothing Like It in the World

Have you ever seen a large map of the interstate highways or the railroad system for the United States? If so, you know that they’re quite impressive. These systems have enabled transportation on an immense scale, and are a vital part of the infrastructure that allowed America to become a world superpower.

Now, momentarily erase that map from your mind, and imagine that there is . . . nothing. Not one road or track capable of transporting any form of motorized vehicle from one coast to another. This is the setting described in the book Nothing Like It in the World by noted historian Stephen Ambrose. In this work, he tells the wonderful story of how the Unification of the Union Pacific Railroad, which built west from Omaha, Nebraska, and the Central Pacific Railroad, which built east from Sacramento, California, completed the transcontinental railroad. Despite daunting obstacles, these men prevailed at a seemingly insurmountable task.

This piece of American history offers several great spiritual lessons and headliners to the future as well. At times the road we travel to the Kingdom of God can seem quite difficult and discouraging. Like the building of the railroad, it has many challenging obstacles. However, like the courageous laborers on this monumental project, we also must “endure to the end.”

Another lesson is learned through the character of Theodore Judah, an ambitious young engineer who played an important role in the story. Unfortunately, he never saw the culmination of the rail road, which he had made his life’s work. He was a visionary who truly believed in the need for the railroad before nearly anyone else did. Though he did not witness it in his lifetime, the nation reaped the fruits of his labors.

Like him, we also must be fully committed to a lofty goal and a glorious vision that we know will be accomplished. In Isaiah 35:8-10, the Bible speaks of a much more important road, a “Highway of Holiness,” and its description is wonderful. Those who travel on it will do so with singing, joy and gladness. God has given us an awesome opportunity to be visionary men and women like Theodore Judah. He has called us to see the need for the road, to believe it will happen and to do everything we can to prepare to help those who will one day travel it.

On a much greater scale than the Transcontinental Railroad, the Highway of Holiness will be a critical element of the growth of the heavenly country for which we all wait, the wondrous Kingdom of God. There will have been nothing else like it in the world!

David Cobb
Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation

Treasures in Your Attic

The majority of us have a designated place to store items we intend to use at some point in the future. Often it will be the attic of our home. It is not unusual for items to be stored for decades, collecting dust and depreciating.

We often forget the items are stored and forget that someone could make good use of them if we were to take the trouble to put them there where they were needed. Material goods are of no value to anyone whom stored. Their value is realized when used for their intended purpose.

For example, a truck sitting out in the weather rusting and depreciating is of little value, but if it is put into the service it was made for, to haul loads, it can be of immense value.

Good intentions can be like dusty items stored in our attic (our minds) if we are not careful. We know that we should help others; we believe that it is our Christian duty to do so. We probably know someone who is having a trial, and we have a thought that we should call or send a card or go to visit.

We delay; we store it in our mind’s attic, intending to do it later. Is dust gathering on our intentions of good works? Remember that pleasant words will make the heart glad and can be health to the bones (Proverbs 12:25; 16:24).

I recently experienced the enormous value in receiving get-well cards, notes and assurances of prayers from over 150 brethren across the United States and internationally after a prayer request was posted on the Church’s Web site. I was encouraged off the top of the scale!

Don’t be too concerned about what to say to encourage. I once had a dear friend who fell sick and continued to deteriorate over time. I knew I should go to visit him, but I was too afraid to do it. What could I possibly say to a person so sick to uplift him?

Guess what happened. After visiting and talking, I was the one who was pumped up!

We are blessed when we give. When we have pity on the poor (downward spiral) and not judging to the Lord. When we do good works to others, it is equated as doing it to our Savior (Matthew 25:34-40).

We are very pleased with our good works for other people. We need to be zealous in our efforts (Titus 2:14). A record is being written (Revelation 20:12; Malachi 3:16).

Turning the Hearts ... Correction With Affection

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). We are all desserters of having our children become successful in life. We all realize the need to give them assistance as they grow up and mature in life. God’s Word speaks about correction and guidance and teaching from parents to their children.

When my wife and I had no children for five years of marriage (and thought we might never be blessed with them), we watched others treat their children. We saw some wonderful examples and some, well, not so wonderful examples.

In the early years, we thought if we would just correct and discipline (spank, rebuke and punish) what was that was taken to mean) our children, they would turn out to be loving, merciful, kind, caring obedient children. However, I saw one major area that was often missing along with correction—affection.

You see, if a child receives attention only when he or she does something wrong, then the negativity sets in. But, if a child is loved and appreciated for what he or she does right and is shown appropriate affection, then the correction (which will inevitably come because we are not perfect yet) will be more meaningful and will be in the context of a loving relationship.

Children who are regularly loved will take the correction in a way that will affect them more deeply. After all, the correction comes from a parent who loves them (Hebrews 12:6). They will not feel good to be out of sorts with the one who provides them the affection we all need in life.

I would like to mention that although we should correct and, yes, spank our children when they need it, we also need to show them the love and affection that will enable them to receive the correction more deeply. And we can teach our children mercy by sometimes not exacting the full punishment, especially when we discern that they are truly sorry. Let them know that you are showing them mercy as God shows mercy to us all.

Your children will benefit by correction with affection, and it will enhance their opportunity to become successes in life.

Gary E. Anton

God’s Book of Jewels

When we first met Mrs. W., she lived in a senior citizens’ high rise. She had relocated from Texas, and was unable to attend church.

We were fairly new in the church area we were serving, and she was new to us—but not new to the old-timers there. We learned that she and her husband had been quite active in the Church years earlier, attending services, visiting and participating in numerous service projects. When they moved out of state, the members lost touch with them, and several years later when Mrs. W., now a widow, returned to live out the rest of her days!

It struck me then that we shared such a small segment of her life—mainly her struggles with aging and loss of independence. The years of dedicated energy and service were things of a faded or, for us, an unknown past.

As we got acquainted with more of the congregation, things from their pasts began to emerge. Some had been charter members of newly forming congregations like St. Louis and Kansas City, sometimes traveling many hours to attend services every Sabbath, as well as Bible studies, Holy Days and Spokesman Clubs. Some remembered three services on a Holy Day or three-hour sermons.

Many had stories of sacrifice and blessings, disappointments and renewal. And all remembered when they first came into the Church and why. They were still there, still faithful, still serving when we transferred into that area—living links with the Church’s past.

Now 20 or so years later, most of them have died, and few remember what positive influences they were in the congregation. Sadly, as human beings we are greatly limited in our capacity to remember and to know a person’s entire context.

That’s what makes Malachi 3:16-17 so comforting. God is not limited. He knows us in our entirety. And He remembers and takes note:

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels.’”

Karen Meeker
St. Louis, Missouri, congregation

Pillars of Wisdom: Integrity

Integrity—it’s what we all demand of our leaders, sales people, doctors and pastors. Politicians claim to have it. But what is it?

Stephen Carter, in his book Integrity, makes this observation: “The word integrity comes from the same Latin root as integer and historically has always been understood to carry much the same sense, the sense of wholeness: a person of integrity, like a whole number, is a whole person, a person somehow undivided.”

The Hebrew word in the Old Testament translated “integrity,” ‘tom, has the same meaning of completeness or wholeness. Notice these uses of ‘tom in Proverbs:

Proverbs 10:9: “He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.”

Proverbs 11:3: “The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.”

Proverbs 19:1: “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.”

Proverbs 20:7: “The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.”

Simply stated, the more consistent a person is in knowing what he actually believes, articulating what he believes and conducting his or her life based on those beliefs, the more integrity he or she
has. Yet, we must admit, it is possible for someone to base his or her conduct on a false belief. The person may be sincere and consistent; but does he have integrity? 

Stephen Carter concludes that integrity “requires three steps: 1) discerning what is right and wrong; 2) acting on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; and 3) saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right and wrong.”

Points to Build On

When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He answered: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30).

God requires integrity in our relationship with Him in that we are to love Him with all of our emotions, life, intellect and energy. When we compromise with sin, wrong thoughts and emotions, or expend our energy in ungodly endeavors, we are divided in our loyalty and our integrity is compromised.

On another occasion, a young man came to Christ, asking, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do to have eternal life?” Jesus answered: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Matthew 19:16-22).

This man obeyed God in many areas of life. Jesus didn’t argue that he wasn’t keeping the commandments. The young man had compartmentalized a segment of his life—his possessions—and it was in this area that he maintained full personal control instead of submitting to God.

It is common for people to deal with guilt by “compartmentalizing.” A man committing adultery may appear to be a fine husband and father; and when he is with his family, he strives to fulfill those roles. But as soon as he is with his mistress, he forgets his wife and children.

We see people who are honest in personal relationships but may have conflicting codes of conduct, but maintain a semblance of balance by role-playing.

Sports is another area in which a person who is otherwise kind and law-abiding may participate in dirty play and cheating.

Application

Strive to base your life on sound biblical principles. A principle according to Webster’s New World Dictionary is the “ultimate source or cause . . . a fundamental truth, law . . . in which others are based!” The search of God’s Word must be a search for God’s integrity, the principles on which He builds His laws and instructions.

Strive for integrity in your personal life. We must incorporate these principles into every thought and action. In order to accomplish this, a person must maintain balance in all four arenas of life: spiritual, physical, social and mental. If a person deletes his or her spiritual development, physical health, relationships or mental growth, eventually all areas of life will be affected. Learn to set aside the time necessary for personal growth, family relationships and spiritual development.

The Other Prayer List

So much to pray about. From the coming of God’s Kingdom to a better job—the list goes on and on! Who can remember it all? That’s why so many of us keep our own personal prayer list. As God answers one request, we thank Him, cross it off our list and move on to the next. But as time passes, we can forget His perfect answers to those prayers.

This is where that other prayer list—the answered prayer list—comes in. When we put it to use, it has several benefits.

First, it reminds us of the many times God not only answered, but greatly exceeded, our requests (Ephesians 3:20). This can be a reminder to also add to our list totally unrequested interventions—His blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14, James 1:17).

How about that unexpected raise, the friend who “just happened” to call when we needed encouragement, etc.?

And just as we appreciate the heartfelt thanks of others, so does God ( Psalm 69:30-31). One cannot survive the anod- er: God accepts our gratitude and grants us true peace. We don’t have to worry about the outcome (Philippians 4:6-7). Indeed, the more we stay focused on Him, the greater is that peace (Isaiah 26:3).

It’s often been said that seeing is believing, but as we continue to reflect on God’s answers to our prayers, we can also realize that believing is seeing (Mark 11:24). Time after time God reveals His knowledge of our needs and wants (Matthew 6:8). We are con-

tinually brought back to the realization that He knows us far better than we know ourselves (Matthew 10:30).

These, then, are just some of the benefits of an answered prayer list. If you haven’t already done so, consider beginning your own. As this other prayer list continues to grow, may it help you grow as well.

Nicola Treadway
Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

It’s Not Fair!

Of all the things that she thought were gone, that was the one thing she wanted back. The thief took everything but the most valuable thing of all, the Bible that holds the truth that will keep her focused and pressing on when things are just not fair.

Life is not fair, but my daughter’s Bible helped put everything in focus for me and for her. God has given us something that no one can take from us, His valuable truth and promises.

God is just! He sees everything that you and I are going through. He does not forget! Hebrews 10:30-31 says, “For he that hath said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Life is not fair, and we do get kicked in the stomach from time to time, but we must get back up and press on toward the mark. For God will make it all come out OK in His time. In the meantime, just as my daughter put great value on her Bible, we too must put everything in perspective and place great value on His promises. We must always remember that no one can take away the promises and truth that God holds out to all of us who love Him and keep His commandments!

No one can take the sword unless we let them have it.

We may not have control over everything that happens to us, and we all suffer many unfair things before it is all over, but we do have control over whether we are outraged or not.

Press on! For there is a world coming where life will be fair, and you will have the opportunity to use those unfair things that have happened to you for the good of mankind.

Janet Treadway
Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

The Hebrew Calendar

First, it reminds us of the many times God not only answered, but greatly exceeded, our requests (Ephesians 3:20). This can be a reminder to also add to our list totally unrequested interventions—His blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14, James 1:17).

How about that unexpected raise, the friend who “just happened” to call when we needed encouragement, etc.?

And just as we appreciate the heartfelt thanks of others, so does God ( Psalm 69:30-31). One cannot survive the anod- er: God accepts our gratitude and grants us true peace. We don’t have to worry about the outcome (Philippians 4:6-7). Indeed, the more we stay focused on Him, the greater is that peace (Isaiah 26:3).

It’s often been said that seeing is believing, but as we continue to reflect on God’s answers to our prayers, we can also realize that believing is seeing (Mark 11:24). Time after time God reveals His knowledge of our needs and wants (Matthew 6:8). We are con-

tinually brought back to the realization that He knows us far better than we know ourselves (Matthew 10:30).

These, then, are just some of the benefits of an answered prayer list. If you haven’t already done so, consider beginning your own. As this other prayer list continues to grow, may it help you grow as well.

Nicola Treadway
Cincinnati East, Ohio, congregation

What Does the Word Christian Mean to You?

The word Christian has been in existence since soon after the first-century Church began. Many people in this 21st century claim that they are Chris-

itan without really knowing what the Scriptures say about who the followers of Christ really are (Matthew 7:21-23).

The word Christian will be confusing to anyone who does not have a biblical understanding, because so many nonsiological beliefs and ideas are called Christian today (Isaiah 29:13-14; Matthew 15:8-9). Few realize that these ideas are not pleas-

ing to God (Proverbs 16:25; Revelation 22:18-19).

We can avoid the trap of being wise in our own eyes (Proverbs 3:7, 12:15). We can search the Scrip-
tures daily, careful to find out what God says about our own ideas, so we can truly claim that we are following Jesus Christ’s instructions in worship and festival celebration.

We are the chosen of God (1 Peter 2:9). We are called out of this world and have the opportunity to live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4).

By searching the Scriptures daily to know what God says about His people, we will not follow the deceitfulness of Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9; Colossians 2:8) that is all over the world. (James 1:25)
Brethren Help Member Clean Up Katrina Damage

On Dec. 4, brethren from the New Orleans and Covington, Louisiana, congregations and friends gathered at the home of Dorothy Lewis to tear down and clean out her back shed that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The 16-person wrecking crew made short work of the shed and its contents and were even able to down a few Krspy Kreme donuts in between loads. Her shed had housed her washer and dryer as well as her hot water heater. Flood waters ruined everything in her shed. The water rose to the porch of her home (4½ feet) before receding. Thankfully her home didn’t flood.

Prior to the storm, Mrs. Lewis evacuated to a shelter in western Louisiana where she contacted family in San Antonio, Texas, and was taken to a shelter by helicopter to a highway overpass. Later she was taken to a shelter in western Louisiana where she contacted family in San Antonio, Texas, and was even able to down a few Krspy Kreme donuts in between loads.

Little Falls Says Farewell to Servidios

The Little Falls, Minnesota, congregation had a farewell party and potluck meal following James and Judy Servidio’s final service with them Dec. 17. After 12 years of tending the local flocks as pastor as well as regional pastor, the Servidios have been transferred to Houston, Texas. Parting gifts included a lovely nature scene painted by Richard Prunty and a collection of original poems by the church bards.

Thankfully her home didn’t flood.

Preteens Serve Sherman Senior Luncheon

Dec. 10 was a very special Sabbath day for the Sherman, Texas, congregation. The preteens in the congregation recognized and honored the senior citizens by performing special music and afterwards hosting a wonderful luncheon. The children served the seniors a wonderful meal.

For the second consecutive year, the United Church of God (Barbados) has taken the opportunity on Nov. 30 to have a Family Day activity among its members and their friends in celebration of the Independence Day of the island nation of Barbados. Some 35 persons were in attendance.

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Over 250 Attend All-Ambassador Reunion

The Farmington Room walls were bulging with Ambassadors from the ’60s through 2005. The largest gathering yet—over 250—attended this yearly event in connection with the Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, Dec. 24.

After Sabbath services the room was tastefully and hastily covered in snow! Right, a child in jeans and Down jacket at the Second Annual Young Adults Leadership Conference, held on the shores of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, over the Labor Day weekend (Sept. 2-5). The theme of the conference was “Learning Effective Leadership.”

Attendees enjoyed many physical blessings as well as spiritual nourishment. Gary Black conducted several Bible studies on the leadership lessons found in the book of Nehemiah.

The young adults also had an opportunity to explore the ways in which secular society has impacted the respective roles of men and women in the Church, with Mike and Zelda Hansko leading breakout sessions on these topics. Jim Servidio led a lively discussion on the importance of doctrine in today’s pluralistic society, with suggestions on how to withstand challenges to it.

One of the young adults, Andrew Lausted, gave the Sabbath sermonette about servant leadership, while Mr. Hansko presented his sermon about discovering and properly using our individual spiritual gifts.

Sunday, all learned the value of team-building exercises.

There were many opportunities for us to use our various gifts to serve the brethren, whether at the conference or those abroad. Every breakfast and lunch was overseen by Bob Fahey, pastor of the Chicago, Illinois, congregation, as several young adults would volunteer to help with the cooking and clean up afterward.

We also enjoyed the great outdoors during the weekend, taking walks around the lake and enjoying pontoon boat rides.

Overall, the weekend was the perfect way to transition out of summer and into the Fall Holy Day season, with great fellowship between old friends and new.

The Third Annual Young Adults Leadership Conference is planned for the same location over Labor Day weekend, Sept. 3-6, 2006.

Aimee Lemen

Young Adults Attend Leadership Conference

This year’s Upper Midwest Young Adults Leadership Conference was held on the shores of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, over the Labor Day weekend (Sept. 2-5). The theme of the conference was “Learning Effective Leadership.”

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Corpus Christi Sponsors Mexican Dinner and Talent Show

On the Sabbath of Jan. 7 the Corpus Christi, Texas, congregation hosted their first Mexican dinner and talent show. Immediately after the afternoon Sabbath services concluded, the brethren enjoyed a Mexican dinner. Members provided and enjoyed a mouth-watering meal that included many traditional Mexican dishes. Foods included Spanish rice, charro beans, enchiladas, tacos, chalupas, mesquite-grilled fajitas, barbecued pollo (chicken) and homemade tortillas.

After the meal, an extensive selection of desserts was served, including pies, cookies, cakes, fruit dishes and the traditional pan dulce, or Mexican sweet bread.

Under the able hand of Raymond Herman, the master of ceremonies, the first annual talent show was held later that evening. Brethren enjoyed Dorin Vaughan’s piano composition, Sean Ashcraft’s violin solo, Charlotte Mallia’s flute solo and Arthur Suckling’s unforgettable rendition of “The Prodigal Son in F.”

Interspersed among these presentations, the audience listened to chorale performances by the Ladies’ Ensemble and the Children’s Choir. The members of the Ladies’ Ensemble included Joanne Aschraft, Tina Hernandez, Janie Mendez, Marsha Sackling and Sandra Vaughan. Donni Vaughan accompanied the ensemble on the piano. The Children’s Choir, under the direction of Colleen Mallia, was made up of Shelby and Garrett Duest and Katrina and Sabrina Morn. They sang “God’s Top Ten Commandments.”

As part of the talent show, pictures of “senior” members were displayed in a slide show developed by Jonathan Sitarski. In this presentation, pastor Jack Kendren invited everyone to try to guess who was in the picture. (Most of the photos showed them when they were in their teens and 20s.)

After his or her identity was guessed, each senior member was invited to say a little bit about when and where the picture was taken. This activity helped all members of whatever age to realize that we all have much in common.

On this interesting and high note the evening came to a conclusion.

Arnold Mendez Sr.

Coleman Celebrates 10th Anniversary

On Nov. 19, 2005, 60 people gathered to celebrate the 10th anniversary of United Church of God in Coleman, Texas. Services began with the current pastor, Britton Taylor, who has pastored the Coleman congregation two times, giving a summary of the past 10 years. Greetings were read from Richard Rand and Don Hooser, who also was pastor two times.

Special music was performed by Laura Anderson from Fort Worth, Texas. Ken Giese, regional pastor, was the main speaker.

At the original service there were 23 present and several of those attended services on Nov. 19.

After services Mr. Taylor offered a toast of sparkling juice for the continued well-being and growth of the Coleman congregation. A delicious meal prepared by the brethren was served, and a slide show of church photos and a scrapbook were available for viewing.

Bobbie Hubbard

Cincinnati East enjoys Games, Pizza and Karaoke

Jan. 14 the Cincinnati East congregations (now AM and PM since the beginning of the year) sponsored a fun-filled family evening that offered a variety of activities, along with plenty of pizza to eat! Karaoke, card games and lots of laughter filled the evening, which was well attended by about 200.

All the tables were filled with people playing cards while local members and new ABC students sang to the tunes of their favorite songs. It was nonstop singing the whole evening as people took their turns on the stage.

There were many group acts, along

South African Teen Scores 100

Damian Nathan Naidoo, son of Colin and Meena Naidoo of the Durban, South Africa, congregation, received a perfect score of 100 percent in physical science, placing him among the top students in his region.

According to the newspaper The Rising Sun Chatsworth, this score is unprecedented in the final. “Damian’s 100 percent in physical science is not a surprise. In fact he had an exceptional interest in this subject, scoring near perfect marks throughout his high school curriculum,” the paper quoted S. Moody, physical science teacher at Apollo Secondary School, as saying. The paper called him a whiz kid and said he “made history by being the first pupil to achieve 100 percent in a subject.”

Damian also received 96 percent in mathematics, 97 percent in accounting and 93 percent in computer studies.

Cadence Phelps, 15 months old, performs with her dad, Troy (photo by Janet Treadway) with solos, but Cadence Phelps, 15-month-old daughter of Troy and Cindy Phelps, stole the show while performing with her dad.

Kevin Treybig was the announcer for the evening while Peter Eddington was in charge of the karaoke CDs. The evening also provided a great opportunity to get to know the new ABC students.

Janet Treadway
Announcements

Births

Stephen and Lori Amber (Schoolfield) Mapes of the Denver, Colorado, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Miles Walter Mapes, weighing 8 pounds 8 ounces and measuring 21 1/2 inches long. He was born on July 29, 2005. He was welcomed home by big sisters Jessica, Elizabeth and Alden and his niece, Sierra Johns.

Mike and Amy Wood of Poland, Indiana, and of the Terre Haute, Indiana, congregation, are pleased and proud to announce the birth of their first grandchild, Luke Allen Mishler, weighing 7 pounds 9 ounces and measuring 21 inches long. He was born on Dec. 29, 2005. He was welcomed home by big sisters Jessica, Elizabeth and Alden and his niece, Sierra Johns.

Jenean and Joe Rivers of the Dallas, Texas, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their 25th child, Griffin Christopher Murray, weighing 8 pounds 9 ounces and measuring 21 inches long. He was born on Oct. 8, 2005, in Dallas. He was welcomed home by his older siblings Michael (7), Samantha (5), Wyatt (3) and Malcolm (18 months). Paternal grandparents are Malcolm and Cassidi (Chapman) Murray. Maternal grandparents are Christopher and Andi Chapman. The entire family attends the Flint, Michigan, congregation.

Josiah and John Arnold

My Sehler of Fort Collins, Colorado, and Christine and Jeremy Sehler of Dallas, Texas, are pleased to announce their marriage Nov. 26, 2005, in Critz, Virginia. The wedding party included John Sehler, Jason Beers, Greg Horchak, Lisa Tymkovich, Becky Horchak and Jamie Sehler. The couple resides in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Vera and Al Gordon

Ken and Carol Rageth of Cottage Grove, Minnesota, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on Feb. 4, 2006. They have five children, Jeffry, Becky, Randy, Jerry and Barry, and eight grandchildren. They have been members of the United Church of God, an International Association, for 50 years.

Jenae and Joe Rivers of the Dallas, Texas, congregation are pleased to announce the birth of their fifth baby, Griffin Christopher Murray, weighing 8 pounds 5 1/2 ounces and measuring 21 1/2 inches long. He was born on June 19, 2005, at a Cambria Jean Mackenzie Rivers

Tammara and Joshua are members of the Tucson, Arizona, congregation and reside in Tucson.

Doug and Tanya Horchak of Dallas, Texas, are happy to announce the marriage of their daughter, Christine, to Jeremy Sehler.

Vera and Al Gordon currently host the southernmost congregation in the United States in their home in Pahoa, Hawaii.

On Jan. 7, the Bend, Oregon, congregation had a surprise 25th anniversary celebration for Pastor Larry Walker and his wife, Karen, in place of their usual potluck. The actual date of their anniversary is Jan. 10.

The small but mighty group secretly pulled together a wonderful chicken dinner with all the trimmings. It lacked only dessert. Now, anyone knowing Larry Walker knows how he loves to eat and has a special affinity for dessert. Being the ever-observant shepherd he is, he whispered to Karen during the meal that we must have all forgotten to bring a dessert.

Unbeknownst to them a beautiful cake sat waiting in another room along with a basket of flowers, similar to their wedding bouquet. A poster of wedding pictures was on display. Many friends and family members sent cards of congratulations and well-wishes.

Karen and Larry Walker

One card in particular, from two of the Walkers’ children, contained a very special gift—arrangements for Larry and Karen’s overnight stay at the Sunriver Lodge, including champagne, chocolate-covered strawberries and breakfast the next morning. And best of all, it included a private sleigh ride on that snowy Sunday morning escorted by a costumed driver who furnished cozy blankets to keep them warm.

Member Barb Dunton wrote a special poem for the Walkers, championing their 25 years together in love, commitment and service to each other and the Church.

The road less traveled is the life you have chosen,

Not often paved with contentment and ease.

But the potholes of life teach us patience and pardon.

Through the miles and years of trying to please

The ones we love most and the ones we love least.

May mile upon mile and year upon year

Bring comfort and happiness

And abundant good cheer

To the road you have traveled for 25 years.

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Maria is survived by her loving husband, Lowell; her mother-in-law, Wilma, and brother-in-law, Ed, of Long Beach, California; sisters, Ampie, Cecilia and Marion, and two brothers, Henry and Arthur, of Yuccaipa, California, as well as brothers Raymond, Robert, William and Richard of San Bernardino, California, and David of Hampton, California; and many nieces and nephews.

Maria worked as a secretary, and at home she enjoyed sewing, knitting, needlework, doll making and numerous crafts. Maria is remembered as a wonderful and devoted wife. Maria loved her God and was close to her brethren, loving all. She was a friend to everyone and will be deeply missed.

Jacob B. "Jack" Smith, 81, died peacefully on Dec. 22, 2005, after a year-long battle with cancer. Jacob was born on Oct. 4, 1924, in Baker, Montana, to Jacob and Pauline Smith. He grew up on the family farm and attended school in Moss, North Dakota.

After he graduated from high school in 1943, he entered the U.S. Army. From 1943 to 1945, he worked with West Construction Co. in Whitehorse, Cana-
John S. Robinson

Tribute: John S. Robinson

John S. Robinson, 60, died Jan. 5, 2006, in Austin, Texas, from complications of prostate cancer. He was born Feb. 11, 1945, and was reared in the faith since age 5. Most recently he served as chief executive officer of Dynamic Resource Group, a company that oversees the publishing and fulfillment companies owned by the Muselman family of Berne, Indiana.

For almost 35 years he had been involved in the publishing industry in a variety of positions. Mr. Robinson was founding editor of The Worldwide News, and later In Transition. In addition to his work in the publishing industry in the 1980s, he served on the faculty of the University of Texas at Tyler, teaching journalism, public relations and graphic arts classes. His undergraduate degree is from Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas, and he served on the faculty there. He also earned a master’s degree in journalism from Texas A&M University-Commerce, and had completed other graduate work at the University of Southern California. After moving to Berne in 1989, he was an adjunct professor in journalism at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, teaching a magazine class.

UCGIA President Clyde Kilough writes, “John was a great teacher in everything from photography to writing to newspaper layout. I learned a tremendous amount from him, as both a journalist and a boss, when he was an active writer and had many articles published in Prime Life, a newspaper for senior citizens in northern Minnesota. John had an inquisitive mind and always felt he could learn and share something with everyone he met. Jack made several trips to Germany and Spain to visit his mother’s family.

Jack was a longtime member of the Church of God, and he and May attended the United Church of God congregation in Fargo. As Jack faced his final days, he openly expressed his love and appreciation for his wife, family and friends, and for God’s calling and hope of the coming Kingdom.

The funeral service held on Dec. 26 was well attended by family and friends. Jack is survived by his wife, May; two daughters, Laurie Laney, Pasadena, California, and Jill (Jeff) Berg, Bernville, Minnesota; one son, Garner Smith, Beijing, China; and two grandchildren, Sheena Berg and Sasha Berg.

Darwin Ruggless

Darwin Ruggless, 72, a longtime member of the Church, died suddenly at his home in Arcadia, California, on a heart attack on Dec. 12, 2005. He was born in Prairie City, Iowa, June 3, 1933, where he grew up and went to school.

Darwin joined the U.S. Army for two years and then moved to California while serving in the U.S. Air Force for another four years from 1959 to 1963. There he was called into the Church through an Air Force friend’s interest. He then met and later married his wife, Julia Cooper, in 1964.

He began working for the College/Church in Pasadena in 1968, where he remained for many years as an electrician, then in air-conditioning and other maintenance as he was needed. Darwin was much loved and respected by many. He was known for his hearty laugh, his generosity and his ability to fix or build anything. He was always fixing every kind of appliance and mechanical equipment for brethren, widows or just anyone who crossed his path who needed help, often without asking anything in return.

He was preceded in death by a son, Shaun. He is survived by his wife, Julia; four children, Jacob, Jon and Rebecca Ruggless and Amber Ross; three grandchildren, Jaryn and Jack Ruggless and Nicole Scoggan; and two great-grandchildren, Kelli and Aiden Scoggan.

His memorial service was conducted Dec. 18, 2005, by Robin Webber. As in his life, Darwin’s memorial service cut across all barriers and brought together many people from every walk of life.

John Patrick Perez

John Patrick Perez died July 29, 2005, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. He was 40 years old. John had grown up in the Church in Louisiana and was a much-loved member of the Chattanooga, Tennessee, congregation.

He was employed by Chattanooga Business Machines, where he was the employee of the year, and he was a Boy Scout leader with Pack 326.

Survivors include his wife, Tammy; children, Ashley and Joshua; father, Orey Perez; mother, Margie Hebert; brothers, Gerald and wife, Melinda, David and wife, Rhonda; sisters, Vickie Abu-Shamais and Elizabeth and husband, Andy Borque; a brother-in-law, Michael and wife, Crystal O’Neal; father and mother-in-law, Danny and Nicole Scoggan; and two great-grandchildren, Kelli and Aiden Scoggan.

Gloria O’Neal

Gloria O’Neal; and several nieces and nephews. Funeral services were conducted on Aug. 1, 2005, by Roy Holladay and Dennis Wheatcroft. John will certainly be missed by all of us in the Chattanooga congregation who knew him.

Kay Hirschl of Aurora, Missouri, died Dec. 16, 2005. She was 67. Kay was baptized in 1969. She was married to Dan in 1958. He died in an auto accident in 1997. At age 38 she graduated from nursing school and began working in in-home nursing with premature babies and Alzheimer patients.

She is survived by six sons, Tim, Jesse, Vince, Mark, Brian and David; and six daughters, Wendy (White), Jolyn (Tate), Linda (Ross), Laura (Radke), Lisa (Cross) and Lois (Rowell); along with 28 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Pastor Mike Blackwell officiated at graveside services in Verona, Missouri, on Dec. 20.

Wendall “Bill” Meek died Dec. 12, 2005, at his home near Forsyth, Missouri, following a long battle with emphysema. He was 87 and a longtime member of the Springfield, Missouri, church. Bill moved to the Ozarks after retiring from his TV repair business in Washington state and enjoyed fishing in area lakes. He is survived by Kitty, his wife of 25 years.

Juanita Menral Brewer, 76, died Aug. 27, 2005. She had been a member of God’s Church since November 1974 and attended the Huntsville, Alabama, congregation. Mrs. Brewer had numer-ous health problems and situations over the years, but it was rare for her to miss services. She was always there if at all possible. She set an outstanding example of perseverance. The Church was family to her, and she is sorely missed as we await the resurrection.

The Worldwide News

United Church of God, an International Association

Tribute: Elmer Conley

Elmer Conley died Dec. 30, 2005, at the age of 86. He was a longtime member and elder of God’s Church.

Elmer Conley was born Oct. 14, 1919, in Blue Mound, Oklahoma. He served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during World War II. In the summer of 1944 he received the Bronze Star for bravery during the battle on the island of Saipan in the Pacific.

Mr. Conley owned and operated a cement construction company from 1956 until his retirement due to failing health in 2000.

He is survived by one son, Bill Conley and his wife, Laura, of Clarksville, Arkansas; four daughters, Patricia Forest and her husband, Rodney, of Big Sandy, Texas; Donna Surratt and her husband, Alec, of Cincinnati, Ohio; Barbara Burke and her husband, Guy, of Wichita Falls, Texas; and Ruth Roberts and her husband, James, of Booker, Texas; 16 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Elsie, who died July 1, 2004. His son-in-law Guy Burke conducted the graveside service Jan. 3, 2006.

Donna Surratt

Elmer Conley

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Donna Surratt
James Edwin Gayman, 68, died Aug. 18, 2005, at his home in Roswell, New Mexico. He was born in Seneca County, Tiffin, Ohio, Oct. 31, 1936, to Lowell Gayman and Mildred A. Royster, who preceded him in death, as well as a brother, Lowell R. Gayman. James was a construction electrician and plant engineer. He also served in the U.S. Navy from January 1955 to June 1957 as an electrician’s first mate aboard the submarine U.S.S. Climogore. He stayed in the reserves until 1962 and was recalled to serve on the surface ship U.S.S. Greenwood from October 1961 to August 1962.

Jim is survived by his wife, Louann Noble Gayman, whom he married June 22, 1968, in Mansfield, Ohio, as well as his son, Aaron James Gannon, and his wife, Michele, of Anthem, Arizona; and his daughter, Diane Renee, and her husband, Wade C. Higgens, of Wesler, Idaho; and two sisters, Alverna J. Hentges of Toledo, Ohio, and Alice C. Kress of Mansfield, Ohio. Jim also leaves behind four precious granddaughters, Kaitlyn R. Higgins, Christy J. Higgins, Rose Marie C. Higgens and Chelsea B. Gannon. He leaves two nieces and four nephews.

Jim was baptized in Cleveland, Ohio, in October 1972 and attended services there, in Akron, Ohio, and Mansfield, Ohio, before moving to Roswell in October 2000. He loved the Lord and enjoyed sharing that love with others. He had a positive attitude in spite of a severe trial and expressed his thankfulness to God for a good life and his faith and love. A memorial was held Aug. 21 in Roswell, conducted by Tom Daman, his pastor, from Lubbock, Texas.

Thomas Lee Fox, a longtime member in Ann Arbor, Michigan, died Nov. 7, 2005, right after returning home from the Feast. He had fulfilled a lifelong dream of keeping the Feast in the Middle East and visiting Israel. His death resulted from a heart attack induced by a blood clot.

Tom was born on May 7, 1948, and was a lifelong resident of Ann Arbor. He is survived by two brothers and a sister. Tom was baptized in January 1972. Like the apostle Paul, Tom was a tentmaker, being employed at a family-owned tent making business his entire adult life.

Tom loved studying the Bible and owned an extensive library of Bibles and Bible helps. His other great joy was to attend services and the Feast and to fellowship with God’s people. Tom was a quiet, loving man who will be missed and remembered by family, friends and brethren.

Clayton Sweat, 80, of Bethel, Maine, died Dec. 27, 2005. Born Jan. 8, 1925, Clayton lived for most of his 80 years in the house in which he died.

He led a very busy and successful life devoted to his three main interests: Mary, his wife of over 30 years; his service as a deacon in God’s Church; and his love of electronics and all things electrical.

He served his country in the Navy during World War II and afterward attended a radio electrical school. Following a career in electronics as a TV and radio repairman, he worked for the town of Bethel for some 15 years. Clayton will be long remembered as an avid collector of “stuff.” Many people who needed something knew that they could go to Clayton’s home and probably find it.

He is survived by his wife, Mary; his younger brother, “Skip”; two nephews, Jeff and Dale; a niece, Sharon; a half brother and two half sisters from his father’s second marriage; and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Ada Cardott died on April 1, 2005, after a long battle with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. She attended the Feast and to fellowship with God’s people. She was a wonderful mother who encouraged her children to seek God and His truth. She loved to see them become accomplished in their endeavors and truly loved to see their happiness in life.

She was active in the Church and would organize the potlucks, coffee crews and food for the school and funeral receptions. She also wrote a local church newsletter to keep everyone abreast of events and how to contact the local elders who were unable to attend.

She loved God and His truth passionately and, if reflected in her faithful service at church and for the people. She cared deeply about each of them and always made it her goal to know each of them personally.

She left her husband, her family and God never wavered until her health began to fail her in the fall of 2001. She continued serving even as she started to need the use of a walker and began to endure what would be a year of tests, doctors and uncertainty. Neither Ada nor Perry retired from work until January 2003 when Ada’s declining health forced the issue for them. She did not receive a diagnosis of ALS until March 2003. Her husband made looking after her care his full-time job, which he did with such love and compassion. He was helped in her care by all of their children. Ada and Perry were always greatly encouraged by the constant cards and prayers from the brethren.

At the beginning of this final trial, she wrote a letter to her family. She expressed her deep love for them all and her love of God and His way of life. She loved everything about her life but was able to accept this final road with her characteristic, strong, and secure peace. She was looking forward to the Kingdom and being healed so she could walk again with her husband and all of those she loved.

The funeral was officiated by minister and friend Robert Dick.
ABC Upgrades
The Ambassador Bible Center student computer lab has been upgraded with new computers, and the cataloging of the 2,500 volumes in the ABC library is nearly completed. “We are very thankful to the Blackwell and Hoeh estates for their contributions to our ABC reference library,” said Dave Register, director of educational programs.

Five applications have already been submitted for the 2007 ABC year. “For any who may be interested in attending ABC next year, please consider sending your application early,” said Mr. Register. Applications are at www.ucg.org/abc.

Houston Music Festival Set for Sept. 3
The Second Annual UCG Houston Music Festival will be held on Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006, Labor Day Weekend, at 20737 Broze Road, Humble, Texas. Last year’s outdoor music festival was a tremendous success: 225 people included 2,500 volumes in the ABC library is near-completed. “We are very thankful to the Blackwell and Hoeh estates for their contributions to our ABC reference library,” said Dave Register, director of educational programs.

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The Lafayette, Indiana, congregation would like to invite brethren of all ages to the Fourth of July Melody of Music July 2 to 4. This event will include two and a half days of Christian music, camping and fellowship. Attendees will experience a variety of Christian music in folk, country, blues, jazz, rock and traditional styles. The mission is to share quality time by way of music and give praise to God.

For more information about cost, camping, directions and registration, see the Web site at www.mom07.org. Or contact Tony Pacelli by e-mail at mom0007@verizon.net, fax at (765) 447-7051 or at Melody of Music, VisionQuest Production, P.O. Box 5314, Lafayette, IN 47905.

Members Welcomed to Submit Hymns and Suggestions
The UCG hymn team is seeking hymn submissions for inclusion in our upcoming bound edition. If you would like to suggest a hymn or if you have composed a hymn that has not previously been evaluated, we would like to review your recommendations.

Rather than just sending us the title of a song, sheet music should be submitted as a PDF file and e-mailed to steve_myers@ucg.org or hard copy of the sheet music can be mailed to Steve Myers, 25897 655th St., Kasson, MN 55944. The deadline for suggestions is March 1.

On www.ucg.org
- Compass Check
  See video of home office weekly meeting.
  www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm
- UCG Commentary on This Week's News
  www.ucg.org/commentary/
- Current World News & Trends
  Browse up-to-date world news events by subject categories!
  www.ucg.org/worldnews/
- E-mail Updates and UCG eNews
  Receive e-mail updates relevant to UCG members and weekly HTML newsletters with UCG.org updates. Sign up today!
  www.ucg.org/contact/updates.htm
- On vcmagazine.org
  ■ The February VCM has articles on “Overcoming Adversity,” “Sticks and Stones,” “Sauerkrat,” and a new “Devotions” column.
  www.ucg.org/about/council
- Members’ News
  ■ New articles posted on the Web site for February are “Credit vs. Debt” and “What Do You Know About Credit?”
  verticalthought.org

 featur ed Links of the Month
■ World News and Prophecy Online with blogs on the day’s news, podcasts and more.
  www.wnponline.org
■ UCG News pages with Council meeting reports, letters, Home Office Updates, etc.
  www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice
 If you have questions, contact webmaster@ucg.org

Calendar of Events
March 24-26: “Hidden Treasure—The Pearl” ladies’ retreat, Portland, Oregon (scottsgjr@aol.com).
March 25-26: Families for God weekend, Minneapolis, Minnesota (www.ucgstp.org/familiesforgod).
May 7-8: General Conference of Elders annual meeting.
May 9-11: Council meetings.
May 19-21: Ladies’ Retreat on Deer Lake (north of Spokane, Washington). Theme: Pearl of Great Price; guest: Victor and Beverly Kubik; for more information call (509) 466-4890 or e-mail mmickelson@msn.com.
Sept. 3: Second Annual UCG Houston Music Festival.