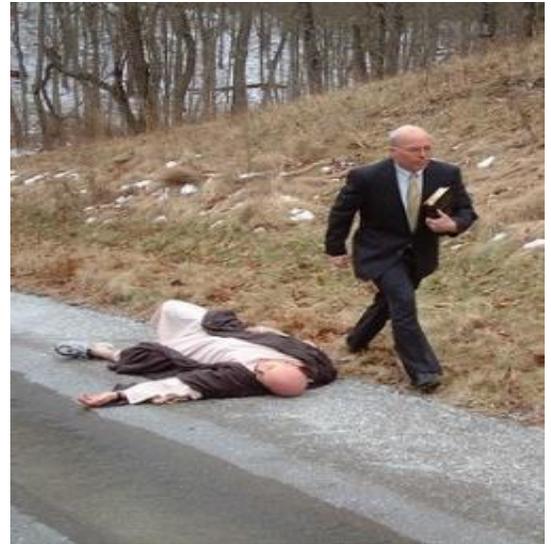


Weekly Bible Study via Zoom, Exception, next study March 31 on Jeremiah 5-6
Weekly radio program WKDW-FM 97.5, 10-11 AM Sundays
Weekly webcast, Vero Beach, Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale

Pastor's Letter, March 19, 2021



"I think someone needs to get involved with this but I happen to be too important with far higher profile activity. Besides, I give tithes of all I possess and I'm already such a good Samaritan." - at least that is what I constantly tell others about me.

Is There Something **Wrong** with this Last Picture?

Am I (or are we) my/our brother's keeper?

It's easy to shrink back. Much easier not to care. To shrug. To ignore. To not get involved personally and to avoid interrupting our schedules. After all, caring can get messy and be time consuming. And typically there's no money in it. Besides...maybe the victim is really the perpetrator and had it coming. And surely all should know that I gave at the office once upon a time and now it's someone else's turn.

But as to helping other people...make no mistake...I think it is a good idea... therefore I have brotherly love. Maybe the Laodiceans can actually help since, unlike us, they need to care more "and get their hands dirty"...or maybe we can send needy people that we would prefer not to get involved with to the Salvation

Army. But please don't call me self-absorbed. As stated... I know a good deed when I see one. And if a good deed has not yet been rendered, again, I think somebody (else) should help out.

Helping with Wisdom

True Christianity includes helping the needy...of course, doing so in wisdom. For example there are ways to help without blithely risking life and limb to walk down dark alleys after midnight, looking for victims in need. Moreover wisdom should tell us not to indiscriminately hand out money to those that cannot manage it. Sometimes it is better to provide needed items or food for these people, as we are able, because we know that our token efforts to be good Samaritans cannot begin to erase the problems of this world. Only God's kingdom will. Until then. . .

The Forgotten Side of Christianity

. . . Our Lord and Savior knows the proclivity of human nature... that people want to be considered good but so often do not want to do that which is good. We need to maintain our sensitivity in a world that is very calloused. A classic story involves a time when a theological seminary was graduating a large group of men that had studied for the ministry. They were told that next Friday morning that they were to take the most important test of their lives. They were to leave the breakfast hall precisely at 8 AM to make it on time to the study hall where they would take a two hour test on their recall of the Bible.

At precisely 8 AM that Friday, a hundred students hurried out of the breakfast hall, running to the testing area. Unfortunately two students collapsed en route. You might think that the Christian thing to do would be for the students to stop running and render help to the two victims but instead, almost everyone stampeded to the study hall to arrive on time to take the test. When they arrived they were told that they had **flunked** the test, The only ones that passed were the very few that stopped to help those in apparent need. I say "apparent" because the entire fainting spells were staged. So the real test involved their concern for others rather than their recall of Bible verses.



The more caring students risked missing the test because they prioritized others more highly. It is true that we cannot possibly respond to every need that we see, but there are times when opportunity to help will come along...sometimes when it is convenient for us to intervene and sometimes when it is not. The picture above shows a runner more interested in assisting an athlete in need rather than in winning a race for a “corruptible crown” (I Corinthians 9:25)



I was hungry, a stranger and naked...

In Matthew 25:34-45, Christ likened Himself to an undesirable stranger who appeared to have wasted part of his life with either prison, poverty, drugs, alcoholism or hunger. As a respecter of persons, most people would happily assist Christ in need, especially if He were well dressed or considered wealthy, but if He looked like an unkempt pariah, probably most would not lift a finger to help. This reminds us of the Sadducees and Pharisees who only gave when there was a reward involved such as a large audience of witnesses nodding in approval. But Good Samaritans also help when there are no strings attached and no one's watching.



This is such an important time of year for us to examine ourselves to renew our dedication to God and embrace “Heart and Core Christianity” as some would deem it. Key scriptures may come to mind such as “Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven but he that *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven (Mt 7:21) or Luke 6:46 in which Christ asks, “Why do you say Lord, Lord and not do the things which I say?” Are we in harmony with God? That is the only way we can connect in harmony with other. This is not to say that every scrap of our time should be donated to society but that we can balance personal needs and interests with room in our hearts for others. In conclusion and as opportunity allows, we should make a difference for others as “Good Samaritans” amid a cold world of societal indifference and ridicule.

Church services this weekend:

TALLAHASSEE Mike McCarty will coordinate church services. I was glad to be there for the previous two weeks in a row. It is so nice to have Jonathan and Michael Api with us along with Lana and Al Hicks. Services are at 1:30.

FT. MYERS Services will be at 1:30 with Moses Summers speaking. It has meant a lot to have Ron Crumbliss improving and back at services. There was additional good news regarding Bob Branno’s hip surgery that went extremely well, last Monday.

OCALA It was nice to have a full house of people last Sabbath and we anticipate the same this Sabbath. Services continue to begin at 1:30 PM. There will be a pot luck meal which will be an opportunity for some of you to shed excess leavening prior to next weekend. I will be there this weekend to give the sermon.

UPCOMING FESTIVAL SEASON

As we all know, important events appear on the calendar. Next Friday night is Passover. We should all gather before sunset and be ready to observe it. The following day we will have a regular Sabbath service. The starting time will be left to the discretion of congregations. It may make the most sense to have a late Saturday afternoon service where all can remain and go right into the Night to Be Much Observed which is celebrated this year on Saturday evening.

On Sunday we will have one service for each congregation, all starting at 1:30. This marks the First Day of Unleavened Bread. As usual we will collect an offering on the First and Last Day of Unleavened Bread as commanded in Deuteronomy 16:16-17. If you are unable to attend services, instructions for making your offering can be found below.

Also be sure to deleaven your home and vehicles prior to Passover this year. As we know, there are lessons to be learned in putting out leavening. We need this festival time to be a spiritual springboard for us because we live in challenging times that require us to become ever closer to God and His ways. I've attached a helpful list "What Is Leavening" that lists common leavening agents and other products that are *not* leavening though they may be confused as such.

FROM THE HOME OFFICE Webcasts for Passover and First and Last Day of UB and Holy Day Offering procedures

Upcoming Webcasts Available

The Cincinnati East congregation will webcast two services on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, but will not be able to provide a webcast for Passover or the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. Many alternate webcasts are available, and a listing of some of them appears below.

Passover Webcasts

- [Charlotte, NC](#) - 7:45 p.m. EDT; password treeoflife
Charlotte, NC phone: [+1-712-770-5049](#) passcode 396900#
- [East Texas](#) - 8 p.m. CDT; password treeoflife
- [Phoenix East, AZ](#) - 7 p.m. MST; password UCGPhoenix
- [Phoenix Northwest, AZ](#) - 7 p.m. MST; password treeoflife

First Day of Unleavened Bread Webcasts

- [Charlotte, NC](#) - 1 p.m. EDT; password treeoflife
Charlotte, NC phone: [+1-712-770-5049](#) passcode 396900#
- [Cincinnati East, OH](#) - 9:30 a.m. EDT, 2:30 p.m. EDT
- [Columbus, OH](#) - 1 p.m. EDT; password treeoflife
Columbus, OH phone: [+1-602-580-9619](#) passcode 3633080

- [East Texas](#) - 2:30 p.m. CDT; password treeoflife
- [Fort Lauderdale, FL](#) - 10:30 a.m. EDT
- [Phoenix East, AZ](#) - 2:30 p.m. MST; password UCGPhoenix
- [Portsmouth, OH](#) - 1 p.m. EDT
- [San Francisco Bay Area, CA](#) - 1:30 p.m. PDT
San Francisco Bay Area, CA phone: [+1-669-900-6833](tel:+1-669-900-6833) webinar 867 5488 5979
San Francisco Bay Area, CA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCGbayarea>
- [Vero Beach, FL](#) - 2:30 p.m. EDT

Last Day of Unleavened Bread Webcasts

- [Charlotte, NC](#) - 10:30 a.m., 2 p.m. EDT; password treeoflife
Charlotte, NC phone: [+1-712-770-5049](tel:+1-712-770-5049) passcode 396900#
 - [Columbus, OH](#) - 10 a.m., 2:30 p.m. EDT; password treeoflife
Columbus, OH phone: [+1-602-580-9619](tel:+1-602-580-9619) passcode 3633080
 - [East Texas](#) - 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. CDT; password treeoflife
 - [Phoenix Northwest, AZ](#) - 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. MST; password treeoflife
 - [Portsmouth, OH](#) - 11 a.m., 3 p.m. EDT
 - [San Francisco Bay Area, CA](#) - 1:30 p.m. PDT
San Francisco Bay Area, CA phone: [+1-669-900-6833](tel:+1-669-900-6833) webinar 867 5488 5979
San Francisco Bay Area, CA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCGbayarea>
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U.S. Holy Day Offering Procedures

(These instructions are the same as last year.)

Due to the restrictions placed on meeting together at this time in some parts of the United States, some members will not be able to attend face-to-face meetings this year for the upcoming Holy Days. For those members in the United States, here are three ways that you can conveniently make your Holy Day offering, *if you will not be meeting in person*.

Donate Online

Many members already use our website's online donation page at donate.ucg.org to give their Holy Day offerings when they are not able to be at those services—as well as their regular tithes and offerings. About a week in advance of each upcoming Holy Day, the offering for that Holy Day will be added to the donation page; it will remain on the page for about a week after the Holy Day, so you will be able to make your offering online, if you prefer.

If you are new to online donations, we have produced a video that walks you through the process: <https://www.ucg.org/members/news/how-to-donate-online>

If you use the online option, please note the following:

- Please include your PIN (the number that begins with “U” on your green Holy Day offering envelopes, just above your name and address.) This greatly speeds up the processing here at the home office. When a PIN is omitted, it requires extra work on the part of the personnel here at the home office to ensure the donation is being credited to you.
- To optimize your offering, please use the “Online eCheck” option, which is the same as writing a check for your offering—because using your credit card for payment costs the Church around 3% of the donation amount to process.

Banking Bill Payment

Others may choose to use a “bill pay” service through their bank. Again, if you choose to pay this way, in the section for your “account number,” please list your PIN and then, in addition, please put one of these codes after your PIN: (H1=First Day of Unleavened Bread, H2=Last Day of Unleavened Bread, H3=Pentecost). This will help us credit the correct fund for your donation receipt.

Sent by Mail

For those who choose to mail their Holy Day offerings, please use the green Holy Day offering envelopes which were mailed to you earlier. Please use a separate check and envelope for each Holy Day offering. You will then need to place these envelopes into another carrier envelope and mail to the following address:

United Church of God - HDO
P.O. Box 541027
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Thank you for your cooperation during these extraordinary times we find ourselves in this year.

— Ministerial and Member Services

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