UNITED NEWS

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news AT A GLANCE

Council of Elders Gathers for Quarterly Meeting

The Council of Elders met in Milford, Ohio, at the home office of the United Church of God for its quarterly meeting on December 6-8. The meetings were scheduled slightly different than the normal meeting format to accommodate a day's worth of strategic planning exercises on Monday, December 5, with the intent for each Council member to give input and to explore the vision of the church before formally evaluating the matter of the strategic plan the next two days during the normal Council meetings.

On Tuesday, December 6, the meeting was kicked off by a report given by Robin Webber on the results of the member survey recently conducted. Overall results from the survey indicate a greater level of happiness and excitement regarding the forward movement of the church. One notable element of this is what's called the "Net Promoter Score," which in the case of the church is measured by the number of members who enthusiastically responded to the survey question: "How willing are you to recommend contact with the United Church of God to non-members?"

Please see "News at a Glance," page 13

Update & Correction for *Beyond Today* on the *Word Network:*

The Tuesday airtime printed last month has changed to Thursday. On that day, the airtimes are 5:30 p.m. EST; 4:30 p.m. CST; 3:30 p.m. MST; 2:30 p.m. PST.

The weekend airtime was misprinted last month. The correct time is Sundays at 1:30 a.m. EST; 12:30 a.m. CST; 11:30 p.m. MST (Saturday); 10:30 p.m. PST (Saturday).

Winter Family Weekend in Cincinnati a Big Success



Photo: Victor Kubik

A large audience turned out to see the live presentation of *Beyond Today* during the Winter Family Weekend held at the Great Wolf Lodge. The weekend was a smashing success, with sports, seminars, dances and more. It's on contract to be held again at the Great Wolf Lodge in 2012.

by Gary Antion

As I sat at a table in the water park at Great Wolf Lodge, I commented to my wife of the delight I felt at seeing the smiling faces of the brethren after enjoying the wave pool or the expansive hot tub, the exciting rides or just enjoying a cool drink and visiting. They were truly having a wonderful time with each other.

But that was only a snippet of the four day event. A Friday evening Bible Study officially initiated the Winter Family Weekend with Matthew Fenchel bringing the study and encouraging the brethren to keep going towards the goal despite the challenges of being a Christian in a world not going the same direction. The dessert social followed and then more fellowship and hymn singing. A total of 714 partook of this opening event.

Sabbath began with a variety of five teen seminars and five adult seminars in the morning hours. Pre-teens had two hours of Sabbath school. These, too, were well attended with nearly 500 taking advantage of theme-related topics in the seminars and biblical lessons in Sabbath school for those under 12.

Sabbath services utilized every seat in the house with right at 1,100 in attendance. We had over 250 connections to the webcast, which could represent one thousand more because several churches were connected in addition to individuals.

Greg Thomas, pastor of the Cleveland, Ohio, congregation delivered the message, which was about what we will pass on to generations after us. He challenged us all to be the ones who drew lines in the sand to stand for God's law and His way, breaking the cycle of bad inherited family traits. He used several vivid biblical and personal examples to drive the lesson home. Deuteronomy 7:9 was a scripture that he referred to regarding what we will do for our future generations. Everyone was inspired and uplifted by the sermon.

Sunday and Monday began the educational and sports activities. Seminars featured topics regarding fellowship, family and children, dysfunctional family issues, a Council of Elders question and answer session, Ambassador Bible Center seminars, World News and Prophecy topics, the new website and a special taping of the *Beyond Today* program. A live audience was able to view the three presenters—Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty—each present their own program. The room was filled to capacity.

Dances for the teens, young adults and

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BY THE NUMBERS

375,673

Worldwide circulation of the Nov/Dec issue of *The Good News* magazine.

news from AROUND THE WORLD

Creation vs. Evolution: Australian Student Shares Her Faith

by Geoff Robertson

It is one thing to be asked to give an account of what you believe and another to create an opportunity to do so. Lauren Gray, 14 years old, from the Brisbane congregation, received an A for her speech entitled, *Creation vs. Evolution.*

To complete her year nine studies at Mt. Gravatt State High School for 2011, Lauren Gray's assignment was to choose from a list of topics and deliver a speech to her class.

Not satisfied with any of the supplied titles, Lauren asked her teacher if she could speak on the topic of creation vs. evolution, in favor of creation. With her teacher's approval, Lauren set about preparing her argument.

"My main resource was the UCG booklet, *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*" Lauren said, and after a week of researching and creating PowerPoint slides, her speech was ready.

"Were you nervous?" I asked. "No, I was really confident that I had excellent material and my argument was sound," she said.

Lauren's Presentation

On Monday, Nov. 28, 2011, with eight minutes to present her assignment, Lauren began her speech in front of 25 classmates:

"Charles Darwin is regarded as one of the founding evolution theorists. However even Charles Darwin conceded that there were certain things that they did not fully understand because they didn't have appropriate technology to investigate things further.

For example, in Darwin's time the cell could only be viewed at a magnification of several hundred times. By using the best technology of their day, when scientists viewed the cell they saw a relatively disappointing spectacle, appearing only as an ever changing and apparently disordered pattern of blobs and particles which, under the influence of unseen turbulent forces, were continually tossed haphazardly in all directions (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* page 328). Because of what Darwin witnessed through the microscope he was adamant about his theories.

The years since then have brought astounding technological advancements. Now researchers can peer into the tiniest parts of cells. Do they still see only formless blobs, or do they witness something far more astounding?"

'To grasp the reality of life as it has been revealed by molecular biology, writes Dr. Denton, we must magnify a cell a thousand million times until it is twenty kilometres in diameter and resembles a giant airship large enough to cover a great city like London or New York. What we would then see would be an object of unparalleled complexity and adaptive design.

On the surface of the cell we would see millions of openings, like the port holes of a vast space ship, opening and closing to allow a continual stream of materials in and out. If we were to enter one of these openings we would find ourselves in a world of supreme technology and bewildering complexity. We would see endless highly organised corridors and conduits branching in every direction away from the perimeter of the cell, some leading to the central memory bank in the nucleus and others to assembly plants and processing units. The nucleus itself would be a vast spherical chamber more than a kilometre in diameter, resembling a geodesic dome inside of which we would see, all neatly stacked together in ordered arrays, the miles of coiled chains of the DNA molecules...'

This is a description of one cell. The human body contains about 10 trillion brain, nerve, muscle and other types of cells, each one as complex as the other. So as we can see for Darwin's theories to still hold true his mindless blobs would have to still be as chaotic and random today as they appeared to him, but that is not the case."

Lauren then continued with references to Genesis 1, the Big Bang theory and the effect both evolution and creationism have had on society—admitting neither side has always represented the better side of humanity.

Conclusion

Her conclusion stated, "Do we hold on to a belief that we are evolving into something newer, bigger and better than before? Is there evidence of some of the latest evolutions or the extinction of a species because another more advanced species has evolved to replace them? Is there a future for mankind in this belief?

Or do we accept that there is a greater purpose for us - a future beyond what we understand right now? Do we accept that this was all created for us so that we can have a future and that this life isn't all there is to it? In the end we are free to choose what we believe. For me, I choose life and a future. But for you, well it's up to you."

Her final slide called, "What do you believe?" left the class reconsidering their assumptions about evolution, with a spontaneous thirty minute debate on creation vs. evolution following.

Lauren received an "A" for all aspects of her assignment. Her teacher said it was "very persuasive, with very good facts." Lauren may never know the full effect of her presentation. Who knows how the seeds of truth she has planted may one day grow to influence the lives of her friends?

Lauren's decision to stand up for her belief in God in front of her classmates is a wonderful example to Christians of any age. Well done Lauren! May God bless you for your faith and courage. **UN**



Photo: Lauren Gray

Australian church member and student Lauren Gray.

Mark Mickelson Visits Cameroon

by Moïse Mabout

Mark Mickelson arrived for his second visit to Cameroon on the morning of Nov. 23, staying until Dec. 6. During his first visit, he was accompanied by Gabriel Vautour of Canada, who came as a French interpreter. However, this time he came without an interpreter since Moïse Mabout had made enough progress in English to be able to translate during the trip.

Yagoua

The first part of the trip was spent in Yagoua, in the far north of Cameroon, approximately 1,200 miles from Douala. In a 107°F heat, we held Sabbath services on Nov. 26, and Mr. Mickelson spoke on the various roles and service opportunities within the Church. He urged the brothers and sisters not to follow a man and instead to have eyes fixed on God. The brethren were comforted. Among other things, the primary need of our brothers and sisters in Yagoua is a place to hold Sabbath services. For the moment they meet in a small shed made of straw.

On Sunday, Nov. 27, we had a meeting with a man who came from the neighboring nation of Chad. He made the trip just to meet us. It was his first time that he had made contact with any of us. He had heard about the church through a contact address listed in a copy of *Bonnes Nouvelles* that he had borrowed from his neighbor. We had the opportunity to answer all his questions, and he left very satisfied. We will see what God will do in the future.

Douala

On the Sabbath of Dec. 3, Mr. Mickelson was in Douala. He came with two suitcases containing large tents for the youth camp and other youth programs. The entire church in Cameroon is very happy to have this material. The evening of Dec. 4, we held a Bible study, and Ndanga Evee Patrick joined the Body of Christ through baptism and the laying on of hands. On Sunday, December 5, Mark Mickelson attended our *Good News* distribution program in the anglophone area of Cameroon, where the primary spoken language is English. We had distributed the magazine in the towns of Limbe, by the ocean, and in Muntegene. Mr. Mickelson was passionate about our strategy to present the Church in the anglophone region since we are all French-speaking. Mr. Mickelson returned home on Dec. 6. We look forward to his next visit, God willing. **UN**



Photo: Moïse Mabout

Mark Mickelson with the young man who visited from Chad.

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Profile: Bob and Libby Dezso



Born on Sept. 3, 1929, in Nelsonville, Ohio, Bob Dezso's life was being directed by God long before he truly understood who God was. The same was true for his wife of 62 years, Libby, born on Feb. 3, 1931. Both children of coal miners and both one of six children, they grew in love as they exchanged letters for two years while Bob was deployed as a paratrooper after World War II. On Dec. 19, 1949, they were married in front of a "Nimrod tree" (a reference they use to the pagan origins of Christmas trees) at a Methodist parsonage with a friend and Libby's mother as witnesses. They proceeded to Jake's Hamburger for their wedding meal and to Athens State Hospital for work that night. Libby's father was not pleased with the connection, not because he disapproved of Bob, but because he didn't want his young daughter to be married at all. Later Libby's father would claim credit for their marrying. He loved Bob as a son, and Bob was even closer to him than his own sons were. Bob is a caretaker at heart, and he cared for his father-in-law until his death. If you ask them what the secret to a long and happy marriage is, they will gladly tell you: Put God first and your spouse second, and you can't go wrong.

Two years after their wedding the couple and their daughter relocated to Barberton, Ohio, where Bob found a job. They have lived there ever since. In 1967 the Dezso's became interested in the truth. Their interest was fed from three divergent places. First, Libby's mother was receiving the *The Plain Truth* magazine, and when Bob and Libby would visit they would ask if they could borrow the magazine. Independent of and unbeknownst to her, Bob's mother was also receiving *The Plain Truth* magazine, and they would borrow issues from her as well.

Finally, Bob was moonlighting as a transmission engineer for a local radio station in the Akron area. This station happened to broadcast *The World Tomorrow* radio program. Despite all of their exposure, Bob and Libby did not realize that there was a church connected to any of the publications or broadcasts. They knew about Ambassador College and even toured the campus in 1967 with their daughter. It wasn't until they returned home and read an article in the Akron Beacon Journal that they knew there was a congregation in their own town! They contacted David Antion and began attending in 1968. They were baptized one week apart in May of 1969.

As the story of their lives unfolds, a thread connects each facet, and it is a thread of miracles—miracles of protection and healing from God. In 1958 Bob contracted rheumatic fever and was bedridden for three months for fear of damaging his heart. He still managed to potty train their 1-year-old son! Bob made a full recovery. In the late 1970s Libby lost her sight completely due to complications from diabetes. Undaunted, Bob and Libby set about making the changes to their lives needed to accommodate this new challenge. Libby learned to read braille and began using a white cane. Bob rearranged their house so that Libby could continue to run their household; she continued to do housework as before.

In 1981, two years after losing her eyesight, Bob and Libby were on a shopping excursion at the mall. As Bob helped Libby from the car and held her arm as she walked, Libby looked at the mall, and clearly read the sign about a department store having a summer sale. She proceeded to tell Bob that she had read the sign. Bob was, unsurprisingly, skeptical, and he told her so, only to have Libby take off at a run into the mall, reading every sign that she could see. Bob followed behind with her white cane. In God's great mercy and kindness He had restored Libby's sight in an instant.

Both Bob and Libby are quick with a smile, masters of encouragement and happy to tell people of the wonderful miracles that God has worked in their lives. As Libby so succinctly remarks, "God has worked things in such a pointed way that it is impossible to not see His hand in our lives." **UN**

FORWARD!

Focused Education Programs Offer Hope and Help



DENNIS LUKER
President

An important part of the United Church of God is its Focused Education Programs. What are these programs, and why are they important? In the summer of 1996, one year after the United Church of God was established, the Council of Elders passed this resolution:

> "Whereas the Church recognizes that modern society is plagued with various social ills and that many of those who have been called into the fellowship of the Church have been affected by such problems as substance abuse, sexual abuse, homosexuality, dysfunctional behaviors and related marriage and family issues, and, whereas, it is the Church's responsibility to minister to the needs of the people, now therefore, it is resolved, that, to meet these special needs, the Education Committee shall:
>
> 1) Develop educational materials addressing these issues for the ministry and membership, 2) Conduct seminars for ministers and members regarding various aspects of focused education, 3) Assist those who desire to establish support groups to help those with special needs. These groups would not replace outside groups, but would complement them."

I was a member of the Council of Elders and on the education committee at that time. We decided to call these programs focused education because they focused on specific issues needing special attention. We recognized the need for qualified and experienced ministers and members who have overcome problems themselves, to help others struggling with serious personal problems. This help within the Church is not to replace the need, whenever necessary, for appropriate help from trained and experienced health care professionals who may not be in the Church.

Let's look at what God's Word says about the importance of helping others overcome personal problems and grow spiritually. Here is what Jesus Christ said and did: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4: 18). Notice that Jesus said He was sent "to heal the brokenhearted," "to preach deliverance" and "recovery" and "to set at liberty." He certainly did heal many people of many afflictions and addictions to sin. This was part of His ministry and part of the gospel message. It must be part of ours as well.

Notice what the apostle Paul said we should do in striving to help others overcome and grow spiritually—"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6: 1-2). Paul, following Christ's teaching and example, said we are to "bear one another's burdens"—to encourage, support and help one another overcome no matter what the problem.

And look at what James wrote about this: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much much…Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:16, 19-20). Peter explained this when he said, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). God's love working in us can make a huge difference in the lives of others. We can make a powerful and positive difference in the lives of others if we are motivated by God's love and a spirit of humility.

This is what focused education is all about. It is about working together in the Church to develop teams of members who have understanding and experience in various issues, and who have a strong desire to help others. Please read (or re-read) the article by Don Hooser in the December 2011 issue of *United News* titled "Breaking Free Website Offers Hope and Help." His article explains more about focused education programs and what you can do to help yourself and others overcome and grow spiritually. **UN**

Choose to Grow

Are you the same person today as you were one year ago? Are you the same person today as you were six months ago? The answer to both questions is no. You have either grown or regressed.

by Donald Ward

In this article we will explore strategies for growth, examine reasons for lack of growth and exhort all of us to resist and reject the things that hold us back from reaching our God-ordained potential.

The dimensions of growth we need to examine include: spiritual, mental, psychological, physical and social growth.

Physically—how is your health? Psychologically—how is your state of mind and emotional control? Both of these dimensions are related to your spiritual state. Mental illness is one of the deadliest plagues in our society.

What about mental and educational growth? Are you reading, studying and learning, or have you stagnated? Is your mind becoming duller and less active with each passing day? Only one-third of the American people say that they read. Those who do read read only an average of seven minutes a day.

Is there excitement and enthusiasm for learning in your life? If you have children, do you communicate that love for learning to them?

Have you grown socially? Are you having more social interaction with others? Does your life represent and reflect hope for the future? Are you a source of encouragement or discouragement?

Are you closer to God and your neighbor today than you were yesterday? Is your focus on God and the resurrected Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father who ever lives to make intercession for you, or is your focus on yourself and your problems? Are you seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Most importantly, have you grown spiritually?

Make a Plan

Do you really want to grow? Do you really? If so, do you have a plan for growth in each of the above areas? You can rest assured that if you do not have a plan for growth in each of these areas there will be no growth.

Physically, you must have a plan for improving your quality of life. Psychologically, you need a plan for achieving greater peace and greater insight on how to cope with life's peaks and valleys. You need to grow toward emotional maturity and willingness to face the realities of life. Mentally and educationally, you must have a plan to grow in knowledge and wisdom.

You need to be aware of the political, social and economic factors that are shaping your life and the world. Socially, you need to develop a plan for quality social interaction; a plan to develop deeper friendships, leading to a greater positive impact on them and others. To grow spiritually, you must have a plan for reading, studying, serving, meditating, praying and growing in grace and faith—beginning at home and extending to others.

One way to approach this is to assess where you are now. Write a description of where you are now physically, psychologically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Then write a description of where you want to be, set goals and develop plans and strategies for achieving your goals.

I can assure you that things will remain the way they are now in your personal life and in the Church without directional leadership. You must learn to lead yourself and know how and when to support and follow others. You must not leave the direction of your life to time and chance.

Oftentimes we sell ourselves short when it comes to what we can accomplish in life and what we can do to make a difference in the lives of others. Some sell themselves short when it comes to the service they can render to the Church of God. We must not come to be comfortable with just treading water and becoming spectators in the arena of life. We must step out on faith and face the world with confidence and courage.

We cannot leave the future of our lives and the future of our children to circumstance and chance.

You can fall into a vicious cycle of feelings of helplessness. For example: "Why don't I exercise? Because I am too tired. Why am I so tired? Because I don't exercise." "Why do I have spiritual problems? Because I don't take care of my spiritual duties. Why don't I take care of my spiritual duties? Because I have all of these problems."

"Why do I have so few friends? Because of a lack of social interaction." "Why is there a lack of social interaction? Because I have so few friends." Remember Proverbs 18:24: "A man that has friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother."

There are people in the Church who are not blessed with a support network. Sadly, we often do not know how lonely and helpless some people feel. This is one of the reasons why we need as much communication and social interaction as possible.

Why don't I read more? Because my education is limited. Why is my education limited? Because I don't read.

You Can Make a Difference

Never fall into the trap of thinking that the way you live your life is not influencing other people. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every step we take on the road of life leaves a footprint in the minds of those we come into contact with.

One of the most valid laws of learning is that we learn method more rapidly than we learn content, children especially. In other words, they learn to do things the way you do things. They learn to respond to trial and trouble the same way you respond. They learn to treat family members the way you treat family members. They learn to relate to God as you relate to God. They learn to treat their neighbor as you treat your neighbor.



"One way to approach this is to assess where you are now. Write a description of where you are now physically, psychologically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Then write a description of where you want to be, set goals and develop plans and strategies for achieving your goals."

Your children are learning to manage their health, psychological state, mental, educational state, social life and spiritual life in the same way you do! The old sayings are so very true: "Example is the most powerful communicator," and, "I can't hear what you say because of what you do." Don't let your footsteps on the road of life become an offense and stumbling block (Matthew 18:1-14).

Apparently we think that if we don't say it, we haven't communicated it. God inspired the prophet Malachi to write a whole book about this frame of mind. In the book of Malachi, God brings forcefully to light the condition of the hearts of Judah and Israel. It's written as a monologue in the form of a dialogue. God speaks His part and the response of Judah and Israel. Judah and Israel professed to be serving God, but in fact they had become God's critics, even accusing Him of being unfair. They communicated their attitude toward God through their actions.

Let's note the great rhetorical question in Malachi: "You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, wherein have we wearied him? When you say, every one that does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" (Malachi 2:17, KJV).

The last two chapters are basically devoted to addressing the rhetorical question of where "the God of judgment" is. God is where he has always been—on His throne in the third heaven watching over the sons of men. Because God is longsuffering and

Please see "Choose to Grow," page 12

Standing in the Gap

■ More than 20 elders—new, retired, volunteer and part-time—are serving anew this year. In this recurring column, we will profile them.



Herb Vierra—Eureka and Red Bluff, California

The United Church of God hired Herb Vierra as the new associate pastor of the Eureka and Red Bluff, California, congregations in February 2011.

He was born in Alhambra and grew up in Southern California. He has two brothers and three sisters. Mr. Vierra attended Cal Poly, Pomona, majoring in landscape architecture. However, his interest shifted to graphic arts. So he left school early and landed a job as a technical illustrator for an aerospace company.

He met his wife, Ann, at a dance in 1965. They were married in 1967, and they have four sons and four grandchildren.

Mr. Vierra was hired to work in the Ambassador College Art Department in the spring of 1969. He later transferred to data processing and worked for Corporate Graphics for more than 15 years. He was promoted to manage the television department in 1989 and was ordained a minister in the spring of 1990. He also served a short stint as manager of the mail processing center. In 1995 he began restoring antiques and became a licensed contractor specializing in custom cabinets and fireplace mantels.

He says it's nearly impossible to have just one favorite scripture, but one that continually rises to the top of his list is Romans 9:15: "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'"

Mr. and Mrs. Vierra live in Redding, California. He loves movies, football and music. He still manages to build a cabinet now and then. He also loves preaching the Word of God. It's a bit of a challenge to speak every Sabbath, but he wouldn't have it any other way.



Scott Hoefker—Charlotte, Greensboro, Hickory, Raleigh, Jacksonville, North Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina and Roanoke, Virginia

Scott Hoefker grew up in the Omaha, Nebraska, area. In 1980 he turned down a scholarship to the University of Nebraska to attend Ambassador College in Pasadena, California.

He was married to his wife Gayle (Travis) on July 29, 1984. They've both grown up in the Church. His first name, since he's often asked, "What's the T stand for?" is Timothy, though he seldom uses it.

He has two grown children. His son Josh graduated from Creighton University and works in computer-related industries. His daughter Felicia is currently in her last semester pursuing a B.A. in nursing at the same University in Omaha, Nebraska.

In his pre-adolescent years, he was hit by a fast moving car and thrown for quite a distance, yet suffered no injuries. "While growing up, I have been directly involved in many situations where there was no doubt in my mind that God is not only very real, but intimately involved in each of our lives." He believes this with his whole being and does his best to share this perspective with everyone he can.

He graduated from Ambassador College Pasadena in 1984 and pursued additional post graduate studies, obtaining his doctorate in clinical religious counseling. He retired as a paid on-call firefighter in 2000, but maintained multiple certifications and used this expertise for many of the United Youth Camps over the years.

Between 1984 and 2000, he and his wife served congregations in Florida, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa. Since 2000, they have served congregations in Des Moines, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Omaha, Nebraska; North Dakota and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

They've also traveled extensively, serving the brethren in Latin America. He, his wife, and daughter speak Spanish and enjoy the cultural differences which exist. 'We deeply love the brethren in these areas…"

His favorite Bible verse is Proverbs 3:5-6. "It's simple, straightforward, and profound, but takes a lifetime of living and learning to truly transpire in our lives...I read it daily, and God has never let me down."



Don McCoy—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Columbia, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia and Delmarva Peninsula

Don McCoy was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on April 19, 1951. It was Passover night, although his family would not begin to observe it until 19 years later. At age 14, after attending Catholic school for eight years, his mother, who had just begun studying the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, challenged him to begin taking the course himself. He labeled it "heresy" due to his Catholic education, but he accepted the challenge anyway. "After about six months of studying, I came to understand that everything it was teaching me was right," he later stated.

Upon graduation from high school in 1969, Mr. McCoy decided to apply to Ambassador College. "I expected they wouldn't accept me, since I wasn't a church member," he said. His application was indeed turned down, but the local minister contacted his family and invited them to church services. He began attending in Baltimore, Maryland, on August 9, 1969, and was baptized on April 8, 1973.

It was at the 1972 Feast of Tabernacles on Jekyll Island where he met Peggy Isdell. They were married on July 13, 1975, and lived in Owings Mills, Maryland, before relocating to the Delmarva Peninsula in 1980, where they still reside today. Mr. McCoy began serving as a deacon in April 1989 and was ordained as an elder in April 1993. The McCoys now have three sons, three grandsons, one granddaughter and another grandchild coming in the summer of 2012.

Since 1971, Mr. McCoy was employed in the engineering/surveying profession. He became licensed as a professional land surveyor in 1988, and he worked for the next 23 years as a subdivision designer, until retiring from the surveying profession on April 8, 2011. Ten days later, he was hired by the church and now pastors congregations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Columbia, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia; and the Delmarva Peninsula. He considers Genesis 22, the account of Abraham's obedience to God's command to sacrifice Isaac, one of the most inspiring passages in the Bible. "When God wants us to do something…even if we don't fully understand why…if we obey without question, God always makes everything work out."

From THE WORD

Chart Your Way on the Road to Eternal Life

■ What are some ways we can chart our progress on our road to eternal life?

by Sabrina Peabody

One of the ways to help children learn how to follow the rules is to give them a chart. An example of such a chart would include a column with what a child should do and another column for stickers or checks to indicate if they have accomplished their goal. This strategy comes in handy for teachers at school, such as myself, in order to express expectations visually for students. Charts can also be used at home by parents to reinforce positive behavior for their child in order to help them improve in particular areas, be it academic, social or behavioral.

Connection to Adults and Evaluating our Christian Way of Life

Sometimes it is not just our children who need help keeping track of how they are doing. We all are working on certain areas of our life—diet, exercise, prayer, Bible study. We should be keeping track of our accomplishments and also what areas we can develop ourselves in order to continue in our goal of building godly character and growing in the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

What Do We Measure Against?

Charts, such as the ones used in elementary classrooms, should be organized to evaluate behavior during time blocks, such as class periods in school, or to assess specific behaviors during the day. At home, younger children may have two to three tasks per evening to focus on such as behavior at dinnertime, sharing toys while playing with siblings and helping clean up. If they receive all three stickers for that evening, they can either receive a reward immediately, such as an extra book read to them at bedtime, or if it is more behaviorally appropriate, have them work towards a reward for the end of the week. Whatever is decided, make expectations attainable. Over time, a child will exhibit more desired behaviors and understand how to fulfill expectations.

Christians are evaluated during their time on this earth and in their behavior each day. God has given us a chart to measure ourselves against—the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). We are to keep the Ten Commandments in their physical *and* spiritual intent. Remember, if a man even looked on a woman with wrong intent, it was considered a sin (Matthew 5:28). As we keep our mind from thinking evil things as well as stopping our hand from doing them, we are supposed to be thinking on whatever is pure and noble while using our bodies as vessels for good works (Philippians 4:8, 2 Timothy 2:21).

If we want to chart our progress on our road to eternal life, we should be as the saints in Revelation 14:12. It reads, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The saints are those who check off their chart daily. Also, if we want to make sure we are on the path to eternal life, Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

Be Supportive, for We Have Support

As a child works towards reaching a goal, their actions should form desirable habits or properly self-regulated behavior. Along the way, it helps to reassure children with praise whenever they exhibit positive behavior. On the other hand, if they are getting discouraged, offer support and guidance to help them shift their focus towards achieving the desired outcome.

Likewise, God observes and supports us. He has given us the Holy Spirit, which gives us "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV). He wants us to learn to regulate our behaviors on our own. Each day we learn how God wants us to love Him and how to better show love for our fellow man. The Bible gives us words of encouragement, lists blessings for godly behavior and tells us to seek God's praise (John 5:44). God wants us to make a habit of keeping His Commandments and will encourage us as we make godly habits along the way.

Picture It

Visuals such as charts improve understanding and communication of expectations and overall learning. Charts for younger children can have pictures to show them what to accomplish during a given time, such as a picture of a child carrying a plate to the dishwasher. For older children, topics such as "dinner time" and "clean-up time" can be written as such. Charts should be posted on the fridge or in a common area where everyone, including the child, can see progress. Plus, it is rewarding for children to actually see the adult put the sticker on their chart or to do it themselves.

Spiritually, we go through times of growth from a child to an adult in which we move from "milk to meat" so to speak. God tells us to post the Commandments around our house and write them on the tablet of our heart. Visualize what it would look like when we walk in all of His ways. Visualize what it will be like in the Kingdom of God when the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord and the law of the Kingdom will be God's Commandments (Ezekiel 44:24, Zechariah 14:16). When we picture it, it helps motivate us and focus better on achieving our goals.

Chart Your Progress Now

God wants us to become the best that we can be by examining ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28). He doesn't want us comparing our progress with others, except that of Christ. Christ is always who we should be comparing ourselves against and striving to resemble, He "who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Have you set any spiritual goals lately? Are you working on not taking God's name in vain? Becoming more courageous? Choosing your entertainment with more care? Growing in grace and knowledge? Set attainable

Personal Goals for Week of January 16-22

	Visit UCG website and read two articles, making at least one comment. Go therefore and teach all nations…" (Matthew 28:19)	x	x	x	x	x		
	Read the Bible for 20 minutes. "He must always keep this copy of the law with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God..." (Deuteronomy 17:19)	x	x	x	x			
	Call my parents or grandparents once each week. Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12)				x			

An example of a chart for making personal goals.

If we want to chart our progress on our road to eternal life, we should be as the saints in Revelation 14:12: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The saints are those who check off their chart daily. Also, if we want to make sure we are on the path to eternal life, Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

goals that will encourage you on your pathway to the Kingdom. For example, when I wanted to watch my words more carefully, I started reading all the verses in the Bible I could find on "the tongue." I also found books such as *Taming Your Tongue in 30 Days* by Deborah Smith and prayed to God about guiding my words each day in conversation. I charted my progress over 30 days and reflected in my journal about steps forward and struggles I encountered. You can chart your progress too! Set a goal, make a plan, and get started!

But What Do I Get?

Rewards motivate. A child's reward should be something that motivates them and is discussed before beginning the chart system. Rewards that are privileges tend to be better than tangible items or things of monetary value. You'll be surprised at what they ask for as an incentive.

Remind your child of their goal when things get tough. If the prize isn't motivating them, perhaps they need to be evaluated in smaller chunks of time or behaviors and have more immediate positive feedback. They may need to have the task broken down into more specific behaviors. For example, when trying to build social skills, focus in on how to have a conversation and then break down behaviors. You may have them "ask someone a question" and "listen to their answer" and then evaluate from there.

As a Christian working towards building godly character and the reward of eternal life, choose goals that resonate with you and a more immediate reward to receive after your dedicated efforts. Possible rewards could be going to a park for your Bible study instead of just at home, going for a nice meal with a friend to share your experience of working towards your goal, getting yourself a pocket Bible with your name engraved on it, or buying a special Bible study pen to write in your Bible.



Photo: Photos.com

If you or your child is asking, "What's in it for me?" the Bible tells of a reward for doing and teaching God's Commandments: "Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Learn to keep these Commandments yourself and teach them to others and you will have your reward.

God's Chart for Us

God set up a goal for us: to grow in grace and knowledge, or in other words, build godly character (2 Peter 3:18). He has written what He requires of us: do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him while learning to keep His Commandments in righteousness and truth (Micah 6:8). He has a reward for us: to be kings and priests and rule on earth (Revelation 5:10). If these are some of the objectives He has set for us, then they must be attainable—for God is the ultimate teacher wanting all to come into the knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

If you need motivation on your way there, pray for what you need and what you want, for God is able to give exceedingly abundantly (Ephesians 3:20, James 1:5)! God is also the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

We are God's workmanship and a work in progress (Ephesians 2:10). Be it getting on a daily Bible study plan or working towards more effective fervent prayer, you can make a positive change in your daily life and put the focus on God. Become as little children, chart your progress as you learn the proper way to live a godly life. Follow the course God has set out for you. Keep the Commandments, and God will guide you into the reward of eternal life! **UN**

Treasure DIGEST

How Important is Faithfulness?


Photo: Photos.com

The Bible puts a high premium on faithfulness. In Galatians 5:22 we read that faithfulness, or being faithful, is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit and therefore a Christ-like characteristic. There is no finer example of faithfulness than God Himself. Throughout the history of Israel, God remained faithful to His people. Nowadays, there is so little emphasis on faithfulness in friendship, marriage or anything that it is encouraging to know that our God *is forever faithful*. Lamentations 3:22-23 is one of many scriptures that confirms this truth: "The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness, His mercies begin afresh each morning" (New Living Translation).

Most mornings during my devotional time, I like to sing a song to the Lord. My favorite choice is "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," hymn 147 in the UCG Hymnal. I find that it strengthens my spirit and builds my faith to be reminded of God's faithfulness to me. The practice of meditating on God's faithfulness makes me more and more grateful for God's goodness to me. To start each day, knowing that my Heavenly Father will shepherd me every step of the way increases my confidence in His love for me and deepens my trust in Him. Following a recent study in 1 Kings, I meditated on the importance that God places on faithfulness in those whom He has called in each age. In 1 Kings 15 is an account of the reign of King Asa, the direct descendant of King David. King Asa ruled the Kingdom of Judah during a difficult period in their history. There was ongoing tension between Judah and Israel. King Asa reigned in Jerusalem for 41 years, and it is worth noting the words used to sum up his righteous reign: "Asa remained faithful to the LORD throughout his life" (1 Kings 15:14 NLT). In the same chapter, we read about the unfaithfulness of Nadab, the King of Israel: "He did what was evil in the LORD's sight and followed the example of his father, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit." (1 Kings 15:25-26). Nadab died at the hand of an assassin named Baasha who took over the rule of the Kingdom of Israel, thus ending the dynasty of Jeroboam, and proving the word of the Lord through the prophet Ahijah (1 Kings 14:14). This further affirms that God can be trusted to fulfill His Word.

To be faithful means to be loyal, devoted, dependable, trustworthy. Are we loyal to God and His ways, especially His Holy Days, keeping all and not just some of them (Deuteronomy 5:29)? Are we devoted in our daily devotions or are we just going through the motions (Psalm 51:10)? Are we dependable, always available to do good works as the fruit of our faith (James 2:17)? Are we trustworthy? When we receive God's guidance, do we obey it? (James 1:5-8).

How important is faithfulness? According to God's Word, being faithful is a crucial criteria for admittance to the eternal Kingdom of God. "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant ; you were *faithful* over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21, emphasis added).

Clare Mooney is a member in the Carlow, Ireland,congregation.

Announcements



Collin James Delamater



Olivia Madison Ogaz

Births

Scott and Michelle Delamater are thrilled to announce the arrival of their third son, Collin James Delamater. Born on June 17, 2011, he weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces and measured 21 inches in length. Big brothers Braden and Dallin are excited about their new baby and future playmate. Grandparents John and Merrie Elliott, Dave Delamater, and Arnold and Cheri Dorsey are delighted as well.

Bobby and Tracy (Crow) Ogaz are thrilled to announce the birth of their daughter, Olivia Madison Ogaz. Olivia was born on April 2, 2011, at 5:52 a.m. She weighed 8 pounds, 15 ounces, and was 21 inches long. Olivia is a beautiful dark-haired, dark-eyed baby girl who is adored by her loving family, especially her big brother Connor. Grandparents Fred and Sue Crow of San Jose, California, and grandmother Sandi Ogaz of Pomona, California, are delighted with this new adorable addition to the family as well. Bobby, Tracy, Connor and Olivia attend the San Jose, California, congregation.

Engagements

Brian and Diana White of Indianapolis, Indiana, are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Kayla White, to David Dance, the son of Allen and Pam Dance of Chattanooga, Tennessee. An early May wedding is being planned to be held in Indiana. The couple plans on residing in Tennessee.

Anniversaries

Ken and Cherie Zahora of Indianapolis, Indiana, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on Sunday, August 21, 2011, with family and friends at a lively open house hosted by Aimee Zahora. They were honored by 103 guests and surprised with live music from Raw Brass, organized by longtime friend, David Porter.

The high school sweethearts began to listen to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast separately and unbeknownst to the other. Only when Ken brought a *Plain Truth* to study hall, did that information become evident. That began a lifelong pursuit of truth from God's Word, and a new way of life for each of them. In 1971, they were married in Dyer, Indiana, and began attending church in 1972.

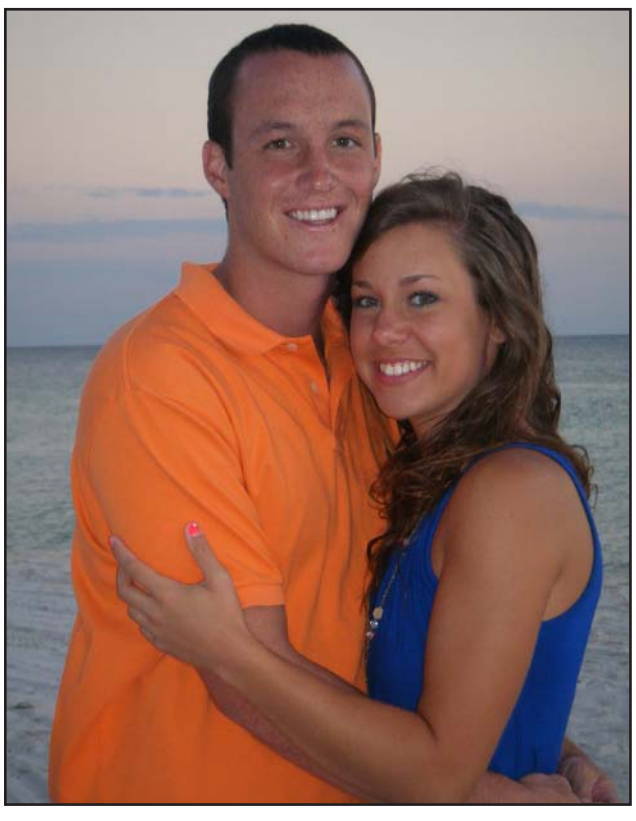
Ken is a retired elementary school teacher who worked for the Indianapolis Public Schools for 33 years. He has served as a deacon in the Lafayette and Indianapolis, Indiana, congregations since June 2005. Cherie has worked for the Pike Township Schools in various roles for 25 years—teacher assistant, computer teacher and most recently as a library and media assistant. She has served as children's choir director in the churches since 1992. They have enjoyed traveling to many international festival sites, meeting brethren from around the world.

Ken and Cherie were blessed with two children. Aimee attends the Indianapolis congregation, and Nathan and his wife, Casey, attend the Atlanta church. The most recent addition to the Zahora family is their new grandson, Cullen, the best anniversary gift of all.

Obituaries

Eileen Claire McMichael Callahan, age 80, died at home in Deltona, Florida, on Wednesday, July 13, 2011.

She was born Aug. 30, 1930, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and also lived in New York and Ohio before settling in High Springs, Florida. She was married to Robert Eugene Callahan on Oct. 9, 1952. They were both baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy, Texas,



Kayla White and David Dance



Ken and Cherie Zahora



Eileen Callahan

in 1960. Robert preceded her in death on July 12, 1993.

Eileen was a school teacher, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She enjoyed painting, writing poetry, playing the piano and gardening. She had a passion for God's way of life, remained faithful until the end, and now awaits Christ return.

Survivors include her sister, Leila Reasbeck of Lake Placid, Florida; her five children, Kathleen Marie Johnson of Deltona, Florida; Karen Lynn Moser of Green Cove Springs, Florida; Thomas Michael Callahan and Robert Patrick Callahan both of High Springs, Florida; and James Scott Callahan of Gainesville, Florida. She leaves behind nine grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

The Twin Cities congregation of UCG sadly reports the death of Herb Koester on Nov. 7, 2011, at the age of 80. Born in 1931, Herb grew up on a potato farm near Long Prairie, Minnesota, and his life was one of inspiration. He said that he was taught to "work hard, earn your own way, and take responsibility for yourself."



Herb Koester

Herb had lived alone for many years and worked in his apartment complex in a property management role. What was truly inspiring about this is that 30 years ago, a hereditary eye condition had taken his sight.

Herb was baptized in 1981, and he and his wife Joyce, who died in 2003, were active members of the Church. He worked for the Minneapolis Society for the Blind for a number of years and always had a good story at the ready. Character and personality are only two of many wonderful attributes that Herb was blessed with.

The congregation wishes to express its deep gratitude for the friends who have helped Herb throughout the years. Those who have assisted Herb would most certainly say that his company was their great reward.

Nehemiah asked God on several occasions that he be remembered for the good that he had done (Nehemiah 5:19, 13:14, 13:22, 13:31). May our merciful Father remember the good in all of us, including the good that was so apparent in Herb Koester.

Announcements: Members are welcome to submit announcements of the births, engagements, weddings, significant anniversaries (25, 40, 50, 60, etc.) and obituaries in their families. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Most items are 50 to 100 words and should not exceed 250 words. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give them to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

Local Church UPDATES



Cake walk auction in the Little Rock, Arkansas, congregation for the benefit of Good Works.



Otha Peeples with his wife Mary Lee and their two children, Howard Peeples of Mena, Arkansas, and Carol Warlick of Goldthwaite, Texas.

Cake Walk and Auction to Benefit Good Works Program

On Saturday evening, Dec. 3, more than 40 people in the Little Rock, Arkansas, United Church of God participated in a "cake walk" auction. The purpose was to raise funds for UCG's Good Works program. We raised $1,500 and had a very good time doing so.

Besides the usual carte du jour of various cakes, pies, cookies and candy, items auctioned included hand-knitted scarves, clothing, dishes, leather purses and music CDs. Our skilled auctioneer Bill Farnsworth kept the bidding interesting and fun.

After services we enjoyed sloppy joes, hot dogs and the trimmings with various soft drinks. During the auction, our teens contributed to the enjoyment by serving free popcorn and drinks. Later, some shared their purchased confections with others. It was a great night for fellowship and fun—and for supporting the Good Works program.

Barry and Jean Howdeshell

Coleman, Texas, Congregation Celebrates 100th Birthday of Local Member

Nov. 18, 2011, was a special day for one of the Coleman, Texas, Church members. It was the day that the small City of Goldthwaite, Texas, held a 100th birthday celebration for Mr. Otha Peeples.

Mr. and Mrs. Peeples have lived in the Goldthwaite area for many years and are known by a great majority of the "old timers" of the community. Although his birthday was not until the next day, the 19th, the celebration went off without a hitch.

Several Church brethren, as well as many local citizens, dropped by to wish Otha many happy returns. The pastor of the Coleman congregation read a letter of congratulations written by Dennis Luker, president of United Church of God, to Otha congratulating him not only on his 100th birthday, but also thanking him for his long and faithful service in the work of God.

Both Otha and his wife Mary Lee have been members of the Church of God for 34/35 years and have attended the Coleman Church congregation since its establishment. Otha and Mary Lee also passed another milestone, their 72nd wedding anniversary, on Oct. 22 of this year.

They were also blessed to have both of their children at the celebration. Their son Howard Peeples of Mena, Arkansas, was able to be with them as well as their daughter Carol Warlick of Goldthwaite.

Clyde Hubbard

Fort Wayne, Indiana, Members produce "Change" for Good Works

Six months ago United Church of God Fort Wayne member Brian Brumley had the idea to collect spare pocket change to send in as a gift to the Good Works program. Little did he know that it would be multiplied to more than $1,000!

He mentioned the idea to some friends at services and soon there were nicely labeled mason jars with slotted lids to hand out at church so people could take them home and start dropping in pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters.

When the jars were collected after sundown at the congregation's annual winter social on December 10, there were 11 jars containing $730.76. The one packed tightest contained $151.36 (lots of quarters!) and the smallest one contained $2.36, no doubt from a child. There were a few bills of "folding money" in some of the jars, and half a dozen people had already turned their coins into the form of checks. All told, the contribution totaled $1,060.66!

The congregation is contemplating whether to repeat the process in 2012, but in any case the experience showed how one little idea can grow dramatically and bear good fruit. Maybe your congregation should try it out!

Scott Moss

Fort Wayne congregation has a "Cowboy Roundup" winter social

After sundown on the Sabbath of Dec. 10, 2011, the Fort Wayne congregation held their annual winter social. This year's theme was "A Cowboy Roundup," and it featured a "campfire" sing-along, western games, a costume contest and a cowboy trivia contest.

The prize for the best men's cowboy attire went to Karl Hermann, the best women's costume to Barb Hancock, the



UCG member Brian Brumley with mason jars full of the fruit of a good idea: a "change" For Good Works fundraiser he prompted in the Fort Wayne, Indiana, congregation.



New sheriff in town—Wrangler Dennis Ulrey smiles as cowgirl Kendall Hermann pins a sheriff badge on at the Fort Wayne cowboy social.

best boy's western costume went to James Morales and the best girl's costume prize was won by Myka Hermann.

The tables were decorated with gingham table covers, bandanas and a boot filled with a bandana and samples of prizes given out for the activities. The meal consisted of western dishes prepared with a prize in mind. Penny Pereira won the best western dish prize with her Rattlesnake Bean Dip.

The activities began as a group sang western songs around a faux campfire.

The evening continued with a cattle drive of seven stations. Seven teams of four to six people/families moved from station to complete the activities. The seven stations were:

1. Quick draw family feud—a Bible scripture game
2. Corn hole game (bean bag toss)
3. Pin the tail on the pony
4. Hat toss where coins were tossed in hats with a point value.
5. Fire sing along
6. Card game of war
7. Cactus toss where each tried to loop the cactus with a lariat.

Teams turned in their group name for a drawing of a grand prize which was won by Jerry Dickey. The prize was a stallion clock.

The participation and curiosity of children was quite apparent as the little ones were enamored over the electrical "fire pit." The four-foot cactus used in the cactus toss had large needles. Children would slow touch them and on finding them flexible, would look up with amazement on their faces. Children are precious, as God says.

Everyone left feeling they had a good time, and all look forward to next year's social, whatever that may be.

Many thanks to Barb Hancock and the social committee for all their work, and especially to Dalpha Meier for providing the fabulous western theme decorations.

Phyllis Minton

Local Church Updates: Send us news and events from your local congregation! Check with your pastor and have him forward what you write. We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photographs with captions. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you would like photos returned. Include the author's and photographer's names and your phone number. Please double-check the spelling of names. Please **e-mail (preferred) or give the material to your local pastor** to forward to *United News*.

Comments from our Readers

Comments collected via e-mail and from the website comment forms.

I wanted to thank you for the booklets and for your *Beyond Today* TV program. It is fantastic, and since I am handicapped and don't get out much, I love to watch it on my computer at home. Again, my profound thanks.

Dear United Church of God, I want to tell you just how much you mean to me and my growth with our Lord. I received a publication today with scriptures, Bible passages, etc., and I opened my Bible to all scriptures and read them. I felt so overwhelmed, so blessed. I just had to tell you that I am blessed to have you in my life now. I am a retired nurse and am on disability for many diagnoses of my spinal column. I live in pain, even as I type this to you. I wish I was wealthy and did not have to watch every penny I have—I'd want to send more than the little offering I sent, but it is from my heart, I want you to know that. I am not one to go shopping, I am home bound. I do not buy new clothing, I go to the Goodwill and dress in used clothing. This helps me financially, but I don't need much to be happy, just a roof over my head and food in the fridge. Anyways, praise God for you.

Thank God for *The Good News*. My family members think my wife and I are weird not putting up a tree and gift giving. We have not done this since we found the true meaning of these pagan beliefs years ago. I have tried talking to them, but in vain, so I go on and do what we know is right in God's eyes.

I have requested online the 12 lesson hard copy format of the Bible Study Course you offer. Kindly rush these courses to me as soon as you can. I have started reading online but it's not as comfortable as having the hard copy in hand along with the Bible. These courses are really interesting—your biblical materials on a whole are extremely enlightening and Spirit-filled. I have also ordered some booklets.

I hunger to know all I can about the Bible and God, and your materials give me hope. I await with great anticipation the Bible Study Courses and the booklets I ordered online […] May God continue to bless and keep you and your ministry in His care. You are really changing lives and I am one of them. Thanks again.

Hello! I receive your free magazine *World News and Prophecy* in the mail monthly. I just wanted to say that I really enjoy how the magazine really sticks to the Holy Scripture and doesn't sway to the left or right. I especially enjoy reading and being reminded this time of year how that such man-made holidays such as Christmas are and where it came from, having no biblical approval. My family and I used to believe it was right to celebrate Christmas in the name of Christ Jesus, even after learning it's origin, as long as we were worshipping God. However, before ever learning of the *World News and Prophecy* magazine, I had a rude awakening in how there is absolutely no compromise in how we worship God (HIS WAY) and no one else's. It seems that this is the hardest part of man's traditions for people to acknowledge […] I now believe how easy it is to be deceived for so long, and also how hard it may be to change, but that it is necessary if one wants to follow God and not the world. Thanks again for freely spreading the word of truth.

I want to use this medium to thank you for the good works, which you have been doing. It all started around 2004 or 2005 […] when a friend and a client handed me one of your magazines. Since then I have been reading and guided by the truth, which you are [teaching] in your magazine. All the teachings have enabled me to understand some of the basic reasons why we exist here on earth. It also solve some of the questions that are on my mind. It enables me to take a different view of life—that is the whole world is created and governed by the self-enforced principles of God. I now know that there is wisdom in following God's way—imagine if all the whole world were to abide by the teachings of Christianity as taught by you in accordance with the Bible. Most of our problems in the world will be solved thus creating a better environment for ourselves.

Good News Circulation Around the World

■ United Church of God produces regular stand-alone *Good News* editions in the English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish languages. Below is a table of how many copies of each language edition we send to each country. We also publish article supplements in the Estonian and Russian languages placed within the English-language edition. The figures for those editions in the countries we send them to is in a separate table at the bottom right of the page.

■ We also place Portuguese language supplements in 799 English language *Good News* magazines sent to subscribers in various nations. This is in addition to the Portuguese subscribers/libraries/waiting rooms receiving the stand-alone edition (as noted in the table below).

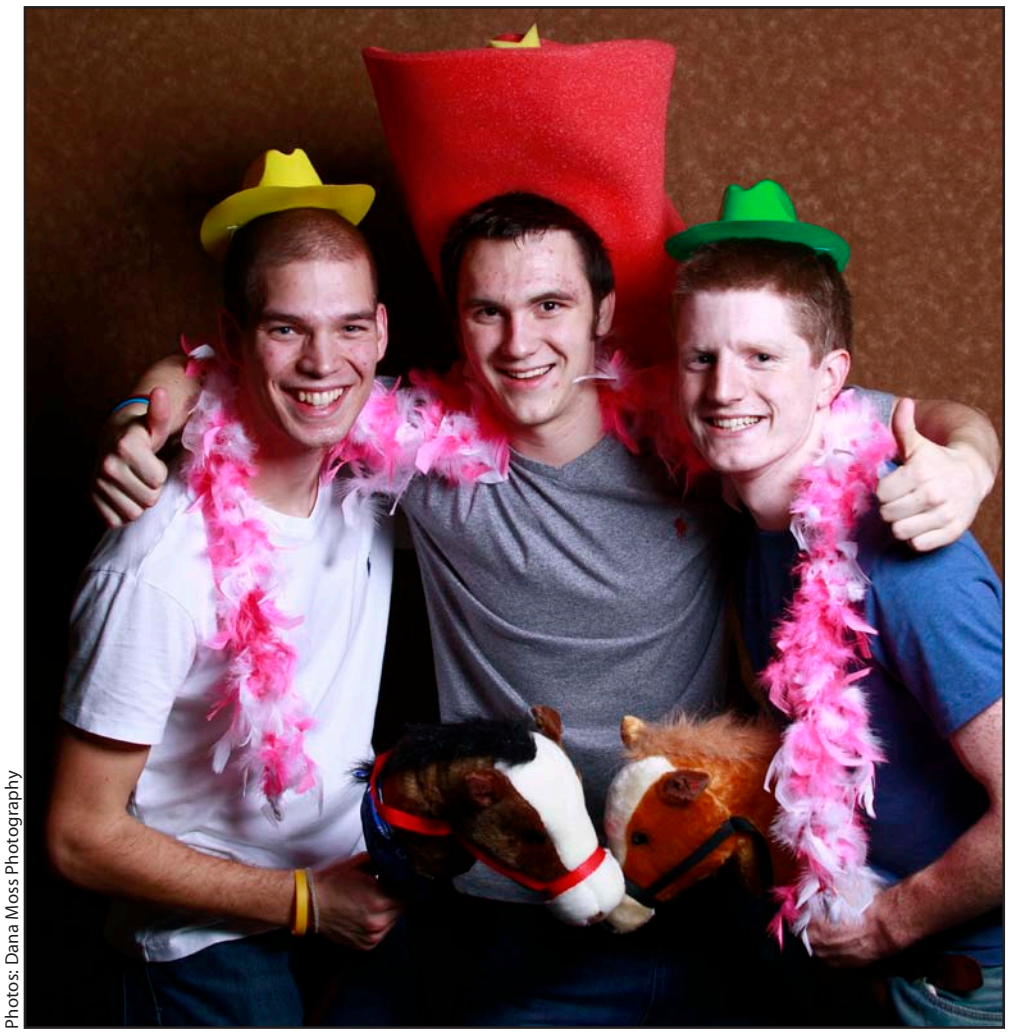
Country/Territory	*Eng.*	*Fren.*	*Ger.*	*Ital.*	*Port.*	*Span.*	*Total*
Albania	3						3
Algeria	19	222					241
American Samoa	1						1
Andorra					1		1
Angola	2	3		2			7
Anguilla	2						2
Antigua & Barbuda	6						6
Argentina	56	2				379	437
Armenia			2				2
Aruba	25						25
Australia	31,560	7	5	16	3	37	31,628
Austria	17		496	3		1	517
Bahamas	130						130
Bahrain	8						8
Bangladesh	26						26
Barbados	297					2	299
Belgium	273	138		2	1	2	416
Belize	57					10	67
Benin	8	45					53
Bermuda	20						20
Bhutan	7						7
Bolivia	12				1	361	374
Bonaire	2						2
Botswana	50						50
Brazil	726	4	2	2	962	13	1,709
British Virgin Islands	8						8
Brunei Darussalam	7						7
Bulgaria	6			1			7
Burkina Faso	22					1	23
Burundi	1	7					8
Cambodia	3						3
Cameroon	61	80					141
Canada	18,030	229	4	4	2	28	18,297
Cayman Islands	4						4
Central African Rep.	1	2					3
Chad		2				1	3
Chile	50	1	2	1		1,021	1,075
China	67						67
Colombia	63					2,191	2,254
Congo		7					7
Cook Islands	3						3
Costa Rica	17					133	150
Cote Divoire	5	141					146
Croatia	8						8
Curacao	22						22
Cyprus	9						9
Czech Republic	21		2				23
Dem. Rep. of Congo	5	49					54
Denmark	51						51
Dominica	32						32
Dominican Republic	16					150	166
Ecuador	16		1			295	312
Egypt	19					1	20
El Salvador	16					184	200
Eritrea	134			1			135
Estonia	1						1
Ethiopia	392					1	393
Finland	69	1	1				71
Fiji	55						55
France	84	1,059	2	2		2	1,149
French Guiana	3	10					13
French Polynesia	2	1					3
Gabon	2	20					22
Gambia	14						14
Germany	222	4	6,393	5	1	4	6,629
Ghana	538			1			539
Gibraltar	2						2
Greece	29					1	30
Grenada	64						64
Guadeloupe	2	43					45
Guatemala	33					414	447
Guyana	213						213
Haiti		2		1			3
Honduras	15					79	94
Hong Kong	342						342
Hungary	14		3				17
Iceland	6						6
India	1,725					1	1,726
Indonesia	162	1		1		1	165
Iran	81						81
Iraq	9						9
Ireland	817						817
Isle of Man	62						62
Israel	63						63
Italy	224		2,431		1		2,656
Jamaica	572						572
Japan	14				1	1	16
Jordan	40						40
Kazakhstan	2						2
Kenya	597	1					598
Kosovo	1						1
Kuwait	14						14
Kyrgyzstan	2						2
Laos	1						1
Latvia	7						7
Lebanon	11	2					13
Liberia	3						3
Lesotho	13						13
Libya	4						4
Lithuania	8						8
Luxembourg	15		10				25
Macau	2						2
Macedonia	7						7
Madagascar	6	22					28
Malawi	451				1		452
Malaysia	1,286	1					1,287
Maldives	1						1
Malta	23	13					36
Martinique	1	37			1		39
Mauritius	186	41					227
Mexico	164	3	2	1		6,931	7,101
Montenegro	2						2
Montserrat	1						1
Morocco	7	25					32
Mozambique	2						2
Myanmar	25						25
Namibia	46						46
Nauru	1						1
Nepal	15						15
Nevis	7						7
Netherlands	858	2	26			1	887
New Caledonia		2					2
New Zealand	1,564						1,564
Nicaragua	7					134	141
Niger		3					3
Nigeria	2,994	1					2,995
Norway	66		1			1	68
Oman	10						10
Pakistan	161						161
Panama	5					56	61
Papua New Guinea	280						280
Paraguay	5		1			33	39
Peru	67		1	1		2,262	2,331
Philippines	11,771	1				1	11,773
Poland	36	1	3				40
Portugal	68	1	1		35	12	117
Qatar	8						8
Reunion	1	20					21
Romania	64		1	1			66
Russia	1	1	5				7
Rwanda	3	23					26
Samoa	1						1
Saudi Arabia	12						12
Senegal	1	6					7
Serbia-Montenegro	13						13
Seychelles	77						77
Singapore	1,671						1,671
Slovakia	8						8
Slovenia	3						3
Solomon Islands	17						17
South Africa	9,958	4	2				9,964
South Korea	7						7
Spain	102	1	2	1		241	347
Sri Lanka	674						674
St. Kitts & Nevis	24						24
St. Lucia	395						395
St. Maarten	5						5
St. Vincent & Grenadines	46						46
Sudan	2						2
Suriname	43						43
Suva	1						1
Swaziland	37						37
Sweden	123		1			3	127
Switzerland	51	38	529	6		1	625
Syria	3						3
Taiwan	7						7
Tanzania	133	1					134
Thailand	34						34
Togo	6	63					69
Tonga	3						3
Trinidad & Tobago	828						828
Tunisia	3	17	2				22
Turkey	11		1	1			13
Turks & Caicos	7						7
Tuvalu	2						2
Uganda	265						265
Ukraine	5		4			1	10
United Arab Emirates	48						48
United Kingdom	7,121	6	2	3	2	4	7,138
United States	241,464	65	35	22	7	2,430	244,023
Uruguay	6					71	77
Uzbekistan	1						1
Vanuatu	10						10
Venezuela	22					598	620
Via Israel	1						1
Vietnam	15						15
Wallis & Futuna Islands		2					2
Zambia	801	1			1		803
Zimbabwe	1,202						1,202
TOTALS	**344,002**	**2,506**	**7,542**	**2,508**	**1,019**	**18,096**	**375,673**

Eastern European and Russian Language Supplements

Country	*Russian*	*Estonian*
Belarus	10	
Estonia	5	391
Latvia	9	
Moldova	5	
Russia	44	
Ukraine	68	
United States	1	
TOTALS	142	391

Please see Pg. 16 for a graph of *Good News* circulation over the past few years.

Includes all language editions and versions as of December 2011. Eng.=English; Fren.=French; Ger.=German; Ital.=Italian; Port.=Portuguese; Span.=Spanish



Photos: Dana Moss Photography

Brad Bornhorst, Dalton Parrish and Ryan Shallenberger at the teen dance held during the Winter Family Weekend.



Gary and Barb Antion, who oversaw coordination of the Winter Family Weekend, in the photo booth at the teen dance.

Continued from "WFW," page 1

family were all well received and well attended. The family dance featured music from the various decades and décor to reflect the eras. There was music for all to kick up their heels. The DJs, Michael Ball and Zach Hoover, Randy Curran and Jonathan Magee each did outstanding work for the enjoyment of the brethren. At the teen and young adult dances, a photo booth was set up with various silly props for the participants to pose for a photo with their friends, available to download and share online.

For our family fun night, we began with free pizza for the 900 who indulged, and the water park was busy afterwards for those who enjoy a good splash. It was kept open until 10 p.m. for us to use on Dec. 25. For those not interested in the water park, games were hosted in one of the ballrooms, and a jam session was held where an eclectic set of music was performed by musicians of all ages in a casual environment.

The sports were all in the same location. Basketball and volleyball were in the same building and across the parking lot were three indoor fields for pre-teen activities, flag football and speed-away. Chattanooga retained its title in men's basketball as they won the final game by a close margin, beating out Old School. In volleyball, the Block Party team won the championship. It was a delight to see teams playing against one another and yet helping each other up when one fell down and showing gracious attitudes when defeated.

Our mission statement is: "To enhance godly relationships through inspirational, educational, social and athletic activities in a moral and positive environment." Our scriptural guide is Colossians 2:2: "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love…" I believe that we achieved our mission through the many workers and through the guidance and inspiration of God through His Holy Spirit!

We look forward to Winter Family Weekend 2012, which will be held once again at the Great Wolf Lodge in Cincinnati, Ohio! **UN**

Continued from "Choose to Grow," page 4

merciful He has not executed judgment on the sons of men. "For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6, KJV). If we received only judgment, we would all be put to death because the wages of sin is death. But God in His love and mercy has ordained His great plan of salvation and provided us with a redeemer, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

God sent messengers, priests and prophets to Israel, but they hardened their hearts and did not respond to Him and grow. God is pleading with us now to get our spiritual houses in order and grow in grace and knowledge. Respond to Him and encourage one another, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together and so much the more as we see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25). Your presence at church services may serve to motivate your brother or sister in Christ to grow. Now is the time to fill your lamp with oil and speak often one to another and encourage one another to keep on keeping on. Encouraging words to one another may be written in God's book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16-17).

So we all need to ask ourselves, "What am I communicating to my spouse, children, brethren and neighbors?" We especially need to be aware of non-verbal communication. From your dress, speech, body language to the way you keep your house are all powerful communicators of growth or regression—of whether or not you love God and your neighbor. Remember the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-40).

The problems that abound in this world can be overwhelming and instead of believing we can grow and make a difference, we may have a tendency to withdraw or take on an attitude of "What is the use?" We can grow and we can make a difference if we are willing to step out on faith. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

The whole of society today is basically in a state of denial and withdrawal. Withdrawal is a form of narcissism where the focus is on self-narcissism has become the "American Way."

Do you believe you can make a difference in your marriage, in your family, with your children, with your parents, with your neighbor? Do you believe you can make a difference in the Church of God? Do you believe you can make a difference in your job? Do you believe you can make a difference in your neighborhood, community, town, county, state, country? If you don't make a difference in all of these areas, who will?

If you don't grow, you will degenerate. So will you leave your future and future of your family to time and chance, or will you have the courage to plan and shape your future? You are making choices that will determine your future—will you choose to grow and help others to grow or will you withdraw and wither away like the grass of the field?

You can choose to make a difference just as Jesus did here on earth. He said greater things than He did, we shall do (John 14:8-14). How many of us believe that?

Avoid Crowd Mentality

Another mind set that prevents growth is the notion that you are safe as long as you are observing the same form as everyone else. There is some kind of false notion of security inherent in crowd mentality and behavior. It's the notion that there is safety in numbers. "Everybody else is doing it" is one of the great cries of youth to their parents. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12) Don't falsely assume that because iniquity abounds and everyone else is doing it—whatever "it" is—that it must be alright.

Some fall into the trap that is described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and their growth is stunted. Note verse 5 states that some have a "form of righteousness but deny the power thereof…" Then the admonition is given to turn away from such behavior. God wants us not just to have a form of righteousness, He wants us to become righteous. The power thereof is the power to become new creations in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ask yourself, "Is my heart in this or am I just going through the motions? Am I becoming love as God is love?"

The parable of the ten virgins graphically demonstrates that they all had the identical form—they all took their lamps and they all slumbered and slept. Yet the conditions of their hearts and the substance of their hearts and minds were vastly different. This parable should be very sobering to all of us. God is looking on the heart. Seek God and a new heart. He wants us to grow in grace and knowledge and have our lamps filled with oil so we will be ready when the Bridegroom knocks on our door.

It is possible to become as little children, to have a perfectly teachable attitude to grow and become converted. You can change. You can grow. Will you be willing to write a description of where you are? Where you hope to be? And will you write out strategies as to how you plan to get there. SEEK COUNSEL, BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE. CAST OFF THE STRONGHOLDS, PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR AND GROW (2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Ephesians 6:10-18).

I hope we all choose to grow. To do otherwise is to die. Will you be the same person next week as you are now? The answer is NO. Will it be life or death? Choose life—choose to grow! **UN**

news AT A GLANCE

Continued from Page 1

The results showed a large gain, rising since the last survey given from 0.22 to 4.54 on a scale average of 1 to 10.

The next item on the agenda was a formal discussion of the strategic plan, which was led by Mr. Webber and Bill Eddington. They led the Council in a session to analyze the vision statement of the church, with the consideration of updating and refining it. Each operation manager in the administration was asked to develop goals within their area of responsibility for submission to the Council.

On Wednesday, December 7, the meeting began with a discussion about the media philosophy, led by Darris McNeely and Scott Ashley, who requested the Council remand, to the Media Committee, a project to update the philosophy for redrafting and presentation to the Council at the February meeting for approval.

Next came the operation managers' reports, starting with president Dennis Luker. He reviewed his and his wife's extensive Feast trip to the British Isles and Europe. He noted the warmth, love and enthusiasm of all the brethren in each area. He also reported on the launch of the elders' wives forum in November. Over 150 ladies have signed up for the forum and 60 have participated in discussions thus far. Many comments on the forum are enthusiastic and appreciative, noting a feeling of greater connectedness experienced because of the forum.

Ministerial and Member Services manager Vic Kubik gave his report next, mentioning the number of ordinations made since January (36) and the stabilization of attendance in the United States (7,621). He also commented on progress made in international areas with rising attendance in some areas where many people left or there was no congregation left at all.

Media Services manager Peter Eddington then gave his report on his department, highlighting the recent good news of *Beyond Today* airing on an additional network, the *Word Network*. He also mentioned that Australia is testing the program on a station in Brisbane.

Financial Services manager Aaron Dean then reported on his department. God has blessed the church greatly during this crucial year, including financially. Most notably, the annual audit was performed, which revealed, after the initial loss of income, the church is "going and growing." He commented, "When I look at our much smaller income and the amount of work accomplished compared to, say 1986 with its much larger income, we look like Gideon's army!"

Mr. Luker, Mr. Eddington and Mr. Dean then updated the Council on a potential project to expand the home office building. The original idea proposed earlier in 2011 was to expand the television studio, but as plans progressed, concern for the expansion needs of the entire office and local congregation came to light. So a complete expansion was discussed, and a preliminary concept was drawn up. Input was solicited from the home office staff and the concept updated. At the report during the Council meeting, Mr. Eddington explained that the proposal is for expansion and remodeling, not a new building. Mr. Dean explained that, if done, the expansion would be able to be done in stages without interrupting the work of the church. Mr. Eddington also made clear that input is welcome from all members and elders on these initial plans before they are voted on by the Council and put before the GCE.

The rest of the day saw reports from various committees and discussions about other Council-related business.



One week after the Council of Elders meetings at the home office, Council members John Elliott, Gary Antion, Melvin Rhodes and Darris McNeely gave a Q&A session at the Winter Family Weekend.

On Thursday, Dec. 8, the final day of meetings, Bill Eddington led the Council through a working discussion on the developing strategic plan. Updates were made to the public proclamation goal, the congregational care goal and the organizational goal. Suggested edits were made to each goal and the final version of each will be decided at the February/March Council meetings before being submitted to the General Conference of Elders for ratification. The overall emphasis for the changes in the goals and vision statement were to stress Christ-like service, humility with boldness and greater, overall church involvement.

Most of the rest of the day concluded with an executive session to discuss and decide various credentialing, ordination and personnel matters.

The full Council reports for this meeting are available online here: www.tinyurl.com/coe-12-11 and the videos of these sessions available here: http://coe.ucg.org/videos.

Mitchell Moss



The Families for God teen prom attendees in 2011.

Twin Cities, Minnesota, Congregation to Host 15th Families for God Weekend

The Twin Cities congregations would like to extend a heartfelt invitation to join us in celebrating the 15th Families for God Weekend in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on March 2-4, 2012. This year's theme is taken from Ephesians 4:12-16: "Joined and Knit Together." We plan to welcome over 300 participants for this event, which includes a Friday night Bible study and services on Sabbath followed by several interactive biblically-based seminars. Our special guest speaker this year is Dennis Luker.

We welcome all teens aged 12 to 19 to this year's prom. The Saturday evening family activity promises a fun and relaxing time as our brethren entertain us with song, music, humorous skits and more!

Sunday's activity will be at the Water Park of America. Non-swimmers are welcome to join us for a hot lunch and fellowship in the observation room with direct water park access. Be sure to visit www.familiesforgod.org for details on hotel room rates, schedules, menus and to download the mail-in registration form. You may also check with your local pastor or elder for registration forms and detailed flyers. For other questions, contact David and Stephanie Mörker at 763-639-8705 or by e-mail at dsmorker@yahoo.com.

The registration deadline is February 15, so be sure to mail in your registration soon! We are looking forward to seeing you in March!

Brian Shaw

Lansing, Michigan, Invites All to Teen Weekend

You are invited to join the Lansing, Michigan, teens as they host the Second Annual Great Lakes Teen Weekend on Feb. 18-20. Our special guests will be Randy and Linda Stiver. Activities include seminars, a dance, bowling and a day at the Michigan Athletic Club. Cost is $35 per person and includes all meals and activities.

The University Quality Inn, where most activities will be held, is offering the special rate of $69.95 plus tax per night and includes breakfast daily. You can make reservations by calling 517-351-1440. Mention UCG to receive the special rate. Please make your reservation by Feb. 1.

A schedule of events and registration forms can be found at www.ucglansing.org. For additional

information, please contact Amy Welch by phone at 517-944-2093 or by email at jeffamywelch@hotmail.com.

Amy Welch

New Hires by Ministerial & Member Services

David Jones, age 39, is being hired as a ministerial trainee, assisting Steve Myers in the Cincinnati East congregation. David, along with his wife Joy and two daughters, moved to the Cincinnati area this past fall so that David could attend Ambassador Bible Center. He will complete the second semester of ABC as he begins his work.

Jaime Salek is being hired as an administrative assistant to Mario Seiglie. He is completing his studies at ABC next week. He will be living in Bogota, Colombia, and will begin work on January 1. He will first go to Garden Grove, California, for ten days of additional training.

Chuck Smith is being hired as a ministerial trainee, assisting Chuck Zimmerman in Florida and the Caribbean. Chuck and his wife Mary will be moving to the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area and will work with that congregation as well in the Carribean where they have already served brethren for many years in the various areas.

Victor Kubik



David Jones



Jaime Salek



Chuck Smith

Cincinnati East Plans for Annual Winter Dance

The Cincinnati East congregation is holding their annual Family Dance Weekend on March 2-3. The weekend will begin with a Bible study held at the home office on Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. followed by a dessert social. Sabbath services will be held at 11:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. The dance will be held that evening from 7:30-11:00. The dress is dressy Sabbath to formal attire. There will be a cash bar available to anyone over 21, snacks and soft drinks will be provided. Music will be provided by D.J. Randy Curran. We will have door prizes and dance contests. The cost is $5.00 per person or max of $15.00 per family.

Discounted rooms are available at the Holiday Inn Eastgate and Holiday Inn Milford.

Please contact Barb and Roy Fouch by e-mail with any questions at fouchb@greatoaks.com.

Roy and Barb Fouch

INTERNATIONAL news

UCG Ireland Holds Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting of the United Church of God - Ireland Charity took place in Leighlinbridge on the evening of Dec. 10. Those officers whose term of office had expired were re-elected to their previous posts.

Following the previous chief executive officer's resignation from the United Church of God, a new CEO for Southern Ireland was appointed at an extraordinary general meeting held on the April 24, 2011. Because of personnel changes, it was agreed to amend the signatories for UCG-Ireland's bank account.

At a general meeting it was also agreed to investigate the possibility of advertising using Google ads. It was agreed that these would be displayed to people in a 50 mile radius of Dublin only. During this period to date, some 8,000 clicks have been recorded and the circulation of *The Good News* has increased from 250 to 556 for the current issue.

It was also agreed to advertise the booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and this ad appeared in *The Nationalist* newspaper, with the response of about 11 readers being added to the mailing list.

Since February a ministerial visit to Ireland has been achieved most months. This has been supplemented with Skype sermons connecting the Isle of Man with the Irish brethren.

Plans for 2012 include holding the first of the Kingdom of God Bible Seminars in Dublin on Saturday, February 11, 2012 as well as continuing with the Google ads for as long as is affordable.

Jan Schroeder

Annual Queensland Women's Weekend Enriching for All

Thirty-eight ladies from around Australia traveled to join together for an enriching weekend of learning, laughter, fellowship and relaxation as we seek to grow in God's way of life and become like Him.

The annual Queensland Womens Weekend was held on Nov. 11-13 at the Alexandra Parklands Conference Center on the Sunshine Coast. The accommodation and center facilities are located in a beautiful rain forest setting, which is only a short walk from the Alexandra Headlands beach.

The theme of the weekend was summarised from John 15:1-8: "I am the true vine and you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit. Abide in Me."

First Evening

We started off the first evening by finding our cabins and then enjoying a relaxed and friendly dinner to begin the Sabbath. We then assembled together in one of the rooms that was allocated to us in the conference center and Jenny Bradford welcomed all the ladies to the weekend. Debbie Efimov led an interactive getting to know each other Sabbath activity where we split into groups and played Bible Pictionary using scenarios from the Bible.

Sabbath

On the Sabbath, other visitors joined us for a church service led by Allan Hambleton. Mr. Hambleton's sermon was about the fruits of our speech and how we can best use our words in our communication with one another. After lunch, the emcee, Fiona Schipke, introduced each speaker with a special gift she had prepared for them. Mrs. Schipke had spoken to the husband of each speaker and relayed the lovely descriptions the husbands had given of their wonderful wives. It was a heart-warming introduction to each lady who spoke.

Mrs. Bradford began the afternoon by discussing the theme of the weekend taken from John 15:1-8.

Mrs. Bradford spoke about how we should be allowing God to produce His fruit in us. As we were shown, there can be good fruit produced and also bad fruit. We must be yielded to Christ to produce the good fruits of the Spirit.

The theme continued throughout each speaker's presentation.

Personal Presentations

Bernadette Marozza presented "Growth Through Trials" where she relayed her own personal experiences. Her emotional and touching speech brought many tears as well as smiles and we all appreciated the strength she had to share this with us. Kim Chick then spoke about "The Lord's Prayer—A Womans View" and spoke of her personal trials in relation to her prayer life. Many women commented how they found this very helpful as she helped us relate to her. The next presentation, by Janine Lucassen, was on "Martha and Mary" (Luke 10:38- 42). Mrs. Lucassen presented a unique way of looking at the individual roles of Martha and Mary through a poem.

After dinner, Jenean Rivers ran a craft and stress relieving session where she showed us alternative nose breathing techniques which help provide a calming effect on our mind and body, before helping us make our own relaxing cold and warm packs.

Narelle Bent, Kay Barton and Debbie Efimov put out a delicious cheese and bubbly spread and we enjoyed the time to talk with one another and digest the messages of the day.

Sunday

On Sunday, Anita Anastasi spoke about "Abiding in the Shepherd." She noted that "abide in me" means to remain, to stay. Mrs. Anastasi spoke of the importance to have close fellowship with God and that we need God, our vine-keeper, as a constant in our life.

After a morning tea beak, Leanne Holladay led the final presentation, an interactive Bible study. We broke into groups and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss various questions that Mrs. Holladay had posed for each group to study.

In closing, Mrs. Bradford thanked everyone who helped with the weekend, including Kay Barton who looked after all of the finances and Judy Nelson who made resources for each of the ladies for the weekend plus a beautiful three dimensional heart trinket to take home. This was a wonderful weekend full of warmth, friendship, inspiring stories and strong messages. We encourage all ladies to come along next year and be a part of this very special weekend!

Leah Vaughan

Featured in ABC Times

■ The *ABC Times* is student-published every year as a means of communication and edification for the student body. In this regular column, we will feature content from that publication.

Child of God

by Amanda Boyer

Before coming to Ambassador Bible Center, I often heard that it was going to be a life-changing experience. I have to admit that when I arrived here, I fully expected this experience to be an opportunity for God to teach me the knowledge of His holy Scriptures, His way of life and to grow in my relationship with Him and others. But I never expected to learn so much about myself.

Besides the lessons I have been taught here about God's way of life, I have been encouraged and shown how much God values His children and my life. I always understood that God was my Father, but I never truly understood how endless His love was for me. Learning that I have value and purpose in God's eyes has brought me so much comfort and development.

I am thankful that ABC has helped me capture this by teaching me God's values in an open and honest way, something we all desperately need. In Luke 18:16, Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to "Let the little children come to me. Do not stop them!" (NLT). I honestly believe that ABC has followed His command wholeheartedly, and I am extremely thankful for the opportunity I have been given to be here and to develop into who I am: a child of God. **ABC**



The ABC chorale sharing a laugh during rehearsal. The members of the chorale each year at ABC have some of the deepest relationships because the chorale provides so many opportunities for bonding and growth throughout the year.



Josh Lamoureux, Becca Dishaw, David Browning, Amy Hunt and Amanda Boyer.

The Home Away From Home

by Michael Slocum

While attending the Feast of Tabernacles, a question came up multiple times: "What is ABC like?" As a current student this should be an easy question to answer, but when asked, the words to fully describe its meaning escaped my mind. After collecting my thoughts and comparing them to other related examples, the one that made the most sense was the parallel of ABC and a family.

The fathers are those that protect and watch over everyone to make sure all feel secure and safe. The mothers are caring and loving throughout each day, sometimes only needing to smile or say "Good morning!" to demonstrate those attributes. Brotherly attributes come across as energy and zeal, which make us anticipate and enjoy our bonding events. The sisterly attributes are the loving connections and appreciation we share for each other, which help to encourage everyone in the class, including the faculty, to be the best that they can be.

It may be strange to hear a classroom of former strangers being an active family after only knowing one another for a few months, but God the Father and Jesus Christ our Brother have given us the basis of it all: love. All we need to do is continue to follow the example of Jesus Christ and have love for God and one another (Matthew 22:39).

ABC has become a home. It is a wonderful blessing from God to be joined together and surrounded by family day in and day out. **ABC**

What's New In MEDIA?

■ Beyond Today Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Airing Period
What is the Kingdom of God?	Darris McNeely	January 1-7
Who Are the Two Witnesses?	Steve Myers	January 8-14
Ground Zero Jerusalem	Gary Petty	January 15-21
The Church Jesus Built	Steve Myers	January 22-28
You Have a Destiny	Gary Petty	January 29-February 4

■ UCG Web Presence Expands

On January 3, Internet manager Aaron Booth reported the following stats for UCG Web activity:

40,578 total Facebook fans.
21,789 total Twitter followers.
701 videos posted on YouTube.
1,863,766 video views on YouTube.
206 Bible FAQs posted.
252,709 Bible FAQs views.
490 e-mail campaigns (This Is the Way, UCG Weekly Update, *GN* Newsletter, *WNP* E-news) sent.
667,273 clicks to our websites generated by e-mail campaigns.
130,831 booklet downloads from Apple's iBook Store.

■ *BT Daily*

Join the *Beyond Today* presenters every day at www.ucg.org/beyond-today/daily/ with the new *BT Daily* video blog. The videos are three minutes or less and were created to allow you to join the hosts Darris McNeely, Steve Myers and Gary Petty in looking at up-to-the-day topics in the news, getting a look behind the scenes of *Beyond Today* and of the home office in general, connecting with the presenters on a more personal basis and most importantly looking to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in day to day life.

Featured Link

■ Drive

http://tinyurl.com/ucg-drive

We were created with a desire to work, and work hard, at something we believe in. God gives us talents and He expects us to use them. Our talent is the fuel that drives us.

As the apostle Peter wrote: "Each of us have been blessed with God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well" (1 Peter 4:10 CEV).

Start to help now: http://www.ucg.org/volunteer/



Drive

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 10-12: Women's Enrichment Weekend, "Instruments of Peace," Garden Grove, California, area, http://garden-grove.ucg.org (look under local information/announcements)
February 18-20: 2nd Annual Great Lakes Teen Weekend, Lansing, Michigan
March 2-4: 15th Families for God Weekend, Twin Cities, Minnesota
March 2-3: Annual Family Dance Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio
March 16-18, 2012: Women's Enrichment Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio
March 31: 13th Annual Southeast Regional Prom, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, www.SoutheastRegionalProm.com
April 28: Annual Midwest Teen Prom, Columbus, Ohio, www.midwestteenprom.com

LANSING, MICHIGAN, TEEN WEEKEND

You are invited to join the Lansing, Michigan, teens as they host the Second Annual Great Lakes Teen Weekend on Feb. 18-20. Our special guests will be Randy and Linda Stiver. Activities include seminars, a dance, bowling and a day at the Michigan Athletic Club. Cost is $35 per person and includes all meals and activities.

The University Quality Inn, where most activities will be held, is offering the special rate of $69.95 plus tax per night and includes breakfast daily. You can make reservations by calling 517-351-1440. Mention UCG to receive the special rate. Please make your reservation by Feb. 1.

A schedule of events and registration forms can be found at www.ucglansing.org. For additional information, please contact Amy Welch by phone at 517-944-2093 or by email at jeffamywelch@hotmail.com.

UNITED STATISTICS

Global *Good News* circulation, 2004-2011

See Page 11 for 2011 statistics country by country

