UNITED NEWS

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2016 General Conference of Elders

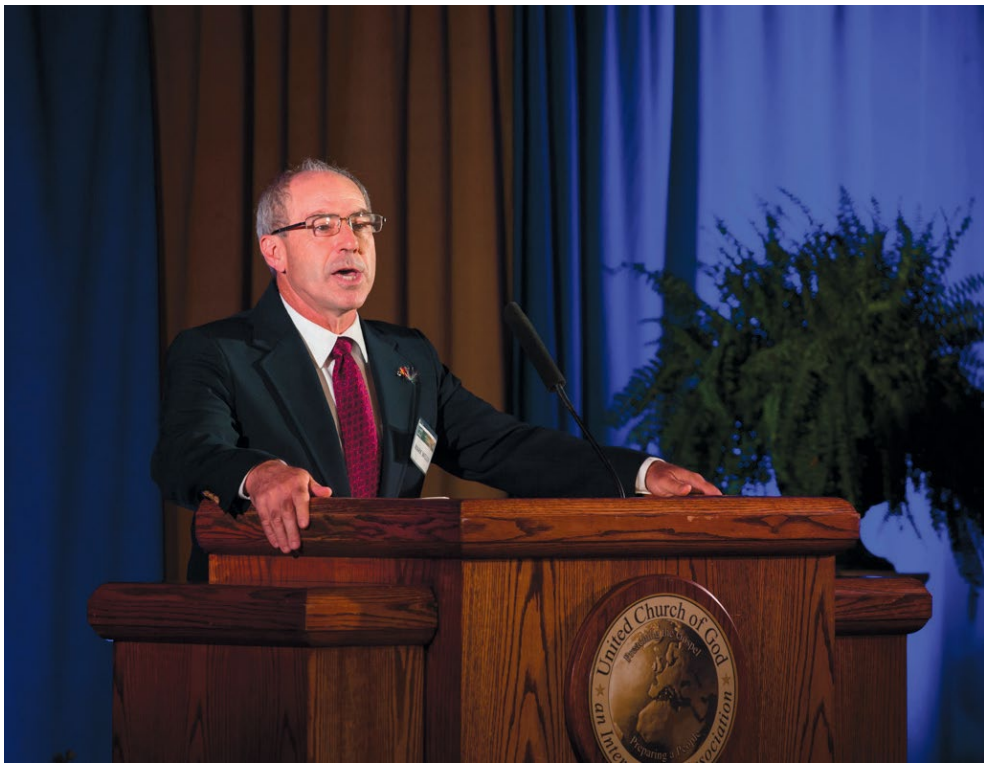


Photo by Mitchell Moss

Mark Welch gives the keynote address at the General Conference of Elders.

by Mitchell Moss

Cincinnati, Ohio—The General Conference of Elders convened for its annual meeting May 15-16. The theme was "Live the Word." Church elders approved the 2016-2017 Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and Budget put forth by the Council of Elders, in addition to choosing four Council seats. Various procedural and technical process changes and amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church were also balloted on. Most notably, a statement defining the marriage relationship as being between one man and one woman was ratified by the GCE. Mario Seiglie, Rex Sexton and John Elliott were each re-elected for another three-year term on the Council, with Jorge de Campos taking the international seat previously held by Rainer Salomaa. A brief description of the other ballot results follows at the end of the article.

The keynote address was given by Mark Welch, pastor of the Lawton, Oklahoma, and Dallas, Texas, congregations. He reminded the GCE members to walk worthy of their calling, live a repentant life in humility, and submit to the will of God.

The meeting began Sunday, May 15, with a session honoring ministers and employees for milestone achievements of service to the Church—10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 years of living the Word. New elders were recognized as well. Addresses given by Council chairman Robin Webber, president Victor Kubik and operation managers Peter Eddington and Rick Shabi, each reflected this theme, describing the status and progress made by the Church in its mission, while also emphasizing the need for continued perseverance in doing that work.

A series of international reports given by ministers from across the world

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Why *America: The Time Is Now?*

by Darris McNeely

The United Church of God has now completed eight *America: The Time Is Now!* live *Beyond Today* events in major U.S. cities. These campaigns are an additional tool and a great opportunity designed to motivate our magazine subscribers and television viewers to make an effort to visit us face to face. By shaking hands with a pastor in their city, and by personally meeting the *Beyond Today* presenters, we hope to add personal contact and engagement with our most regular followers.

Some have asked whether these live presentations fit within the Church's historic mission of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. Others asked if we are trying to get the entire nation to repent and turn to God. Why and how does this theme fit into the mission of the United Church of God?

Continuing a Tradition

In July 1970, 46 years ago, the Worldwide Church of God began a series of personal appearance campaigns in the United States that would span several years. The title of those appearances was *America Listen!* Garner Ted Armstrong, the presenter on *The World Tomorrow* radio and television programs, appeared before live audiences with a strong message of repentance and a call to respond to the message of the Kingdom of God. I attended the meetings in Nashville, Tennessee, that summer and witnessed the campaign firsthand.

Today, we are in the midst of a multicity tour of *Beyond Today* live appearances. We have chosen the theme, *America: The Time Is Now!* for good reason. It is no coincidence that our current theme works off the 1970 theme. We still have a strong message about the Kingdom of God and a call to repentance to deliver to our audience in America, Canada and other countries. God expects His Church today to deliver a compelling message of repentance and hope to all who will hear and respond.



The hosts of Beyond Today*: Steve Myers, Darris McNeely and Gary Petty.*

The message that my fellow *Beyond Today* presenters and I give in these appearances highlights the critically important historic moment that America and the world are in. America's role in the world is rapidly changing. While its power relative to the other nations is still very strong, the cultural and moral underpinnings of the nation are eroding the remaining foundations on which the nation has been based.

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BY THE NUMBERS

375

The number of current elders in the United Church of God

ABC Graduation Ceremony

by Frank Dunkle

On May 22, ABC graduated its 17th class, with 24 regular students participating. Additionally this year, two international students participated via Internet connection, recordings, and class visits. They were able to attend graduation and receive distance learning diplomas of biblical studies.

In the ceremony Ronald Bell delivered a valedictorian address reminding students of the challenges they had met and overcome to be at ABC and encouraging them to continue. UCG president Victor Kubik gave a commencement address that included quotes from all of the students at the beginning of the school year, saying why they had come to ABC. Those statements served as a powerful reminder for graduates to put into practice the knowledge and training of the past nine months.

Presentations during the ceremony included: music provided by the ABC Chorale and two special awards granted to students recognized as outstanding examples inside and outside of class. Kathleen Johnson received the Council of Elders Award of Excellence, and Ronald B. Bell received the Ambassador Bible College Service Award.



Photo by Linda Merrick

Ambassador Bible College class of 2016.

Following the ceremony, family and friends shared cake and refreshments with the graduates.

We are eagerly accepting applications for the next school year of Ambassador Bible College. **UN**

See more photos here:

www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157668602943321

Kubiks Visit Africa

by Linda Merrick

President Victor Kubik spent two and a half weeks visiting brethren in Africa and keeping the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. The main purpose of the trip was to spend time with people and congregations, as well as taking care of business pertaining to LifeNets.

On Friday, April 15, both Victor Kubik and his wife Beverly landed in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Kubiks packed many materials to donate to people and materials for the Passover. The airport in South Africa is notorious for having people's items stolen, and two cellphones that were to be donated were stolen.

The Kubiks were able to spend time with members of the Church in Johannesburg, where they spent their first Sabbath of the trip. On that Sabbath there were 59 people at services. There are many new people in the area, and now there is even a Gauteng choir! Mr. Kubik was pleased at the substance and maturity of this congregation.

Next, the Kubiks went to Malawi. There they spent a lot of time talking with the brethren and discussing LifeNets projects.

Through the help of LifeNets, the Church in Malawi has been able to open up an Internet cafe and a small grocery stand. They plan to someday open up a small produce stand in the same building. Julianah Kachali helps oversee the Internet cafe, and Joseph Mughogho is the LifeNets business and finance manager. He also manages both the Internet cafe and grocery store.

In Malawi Mr. Kubik kept his 50th Passover. The Passover was held in the church hall with the local members. They held a solemn Passover service that was very meaningful. Church services went well on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and later they held a Q&A Bible study session. Also, a local Lilongwe member, Alfred Mitomoni, was ordained as a deacon. He has been a faithful rock of stability in the Church.

This trip has been absolutely essential to bring a lot of things together for the Church regarding our service to this area. Mr. Kubik is deeply grateful for the contribution that Aaron and Michelle Dean have made here in the past few years. It is going to be essential to provide leadership direction for this part of Africa.

There are some major setbacks happening in the country of Malawi. There is an outbreak of cholera. It is a waterborne disease and highly contagious. You can die within five hours of getting a fever, and hospitals don't have medicine for it. Also there is a significantly lower crop yield this year compared to last year. People in Malawi are essentially starving to death.

Some of our people got only one third the yield of maize they did last year. When the shortages become acute, the prices will spike. The Church, with the help of LifeNets, has a plan to buy maize now, at harvest time when the price is moderate.



Victor and Bev Kubik stand with Joseph Mughogho, the LifeNets Business and finance manager in Malawi. The building they are standing in front of is the LifeNets Internet Cafe and grocery store.

There are agencies to buy from where we can distribute to brethren now, in preparation for the looming famine. Earlier in January the Church provided an infusion of cash to avert starvation for our brethren. Mr. Kubik explains we are now looking at what the near future will bring and so that we can prepared for it.

The Kubiks also spent time in Blantyre, Malawi. In Blantyre, there is Church property, where the plan is to build a church hall that can also be used through the week as a school.

At the end of their time in Malawi it was hard for the Kubiks to leave. They visited with so many so thoroughly and felt much closer to the brethren. To read a more in-depth version of the trip please see the TravelPod blog Mr. Kubik created to share his trip experience with the brethren in South Africa and Malawi. **UN**

Read Mr. Kubik's blogs here:

www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/victorkubik/17/tpod.html

FORWARD!

It's in the Details



RICK SHABI
Treasurer and
Operation Manager

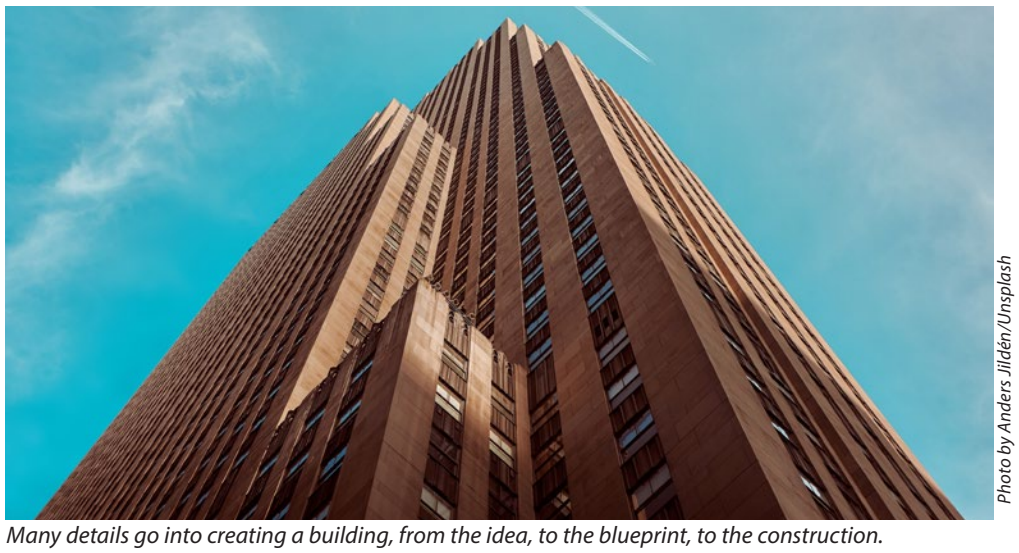


Photo by Anders Jildén/Unsplash

Many details go into creating a building, from the idea, to the blueprint, to the construction.

Have you ever been to an event where everything went "just perfectly," right down to the last detail? The planner had a vision, and then incorporated the necessary details to make the evening memorable.

Shark Tank is a popular television show in which entrepreneurs present their innovative products to a group of successful businessmen in the hope that they will invest in their ideas. They know their business has potential, but many of them don't understand all of the "details" that go into running a successful operation, and they need guidance and direction.

Sometimes details don't seem that important to people who have great ideas. While marketing and delivering a product are necessary "details," accounting and financial management are equally important. Attention to the details often spells the difference between success and failure. Good ideas and good products, without the details, are not enough.

When you see a skyscraper or mall being built, it started with a vision of what could be done on that real estate. For that vision to be realized, a myriad of details had to be addressed. Everything from blueprints, artist's renderings, cost estimates and financing, to plans for interior design and layout, assembling a workforce, obtaining proper approvals, choosing and obtaining the proper materials, and a litany of other things had to be in place before that vision could become reality.

Our God is a God of vision, and He pays attention to the details. Just look at the details of creation, and look at the prophecies concerning Christ's life and death that were perfectly fulfilled by Him. Everything God does is perfect, and the "finished product" of His endeavors does not disappoint.

In the Old Testament, God provided the vision for the physical tabernacle in which He would dwell among His people. Along with the "big picture," He gave specific

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From The COUNCIL

Striving to Do What Is Right



by Jorge de Campos



Photo by Irene Dávila/Unsplash

As true disciples of Jesus Christ we want to do what is right and pleasing to God (1 John 3:22).

In our desire to do what is right, we strive to fully submit to the righteousness of God, which is exemplified by Christ (Romans 10:3-4). How do we, then, put on the same mind as Christ's, esteeming others better than ourselves, being humble and united in love, affection and mercy (Philippians 2:1-5)?

One way that has helped me personally is to keep in mind the "trunk of the tree," the very purpose why we are born, which is none other than to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17-18)!

It is very encouraging to always remember the love that God the Father has for us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8, 16) to make us His children. We have a better understanding—albeit still very incomplete—of that enormous love and the abundant riches of God's grace towards us (Ephesians 1:7) when we become parents like Him and have our own children and grandchildren. How great is His grace and goodness towards those who fear and have faith in Him (Psalm 31:19)! God wants us to ultimately be like Him at Christ's second coming. That really should motivate us all to strive to do what is right (1 John 3:1-3).

What then does God expect of us? Does He want sacrifices and offerings (Micah 6:6-7)? It is like what we expect from our children! What we want is for our children to grow into well balanced and well-

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The Good News

Hard Discussions With Your Children

This is the second article in the "hot topics" series geared toward teens and parents of teens. Please let us know what topics you would like to see addressed in future articles by e-mailing us at compasscheck@ucg.org.

by Rudy Rangel



Photo by London Scout/Unsplash

Talking with your children about "hot topics" is not always easy. But we must raise up our children in the way of the Lord and guide them to make good decisions in life.

I have two young children: a 6-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son. My understanding of my role as a parent grows as much as my children do. Every new milestone they reach also means there are new things I need to teach them. When they began to crawl I had to teach them not to touch the light sockets. When they began to walk, I had to teach them not to walk into danger. This will continue for the rest of my life. I call my parents for guidance to this day.

Our children will learn and mature in many areas in which they'll no longer need our teaching. But until we know they have gained the skills needed, training continues. Training is our main responsibility. We have to train our kids to love and follow God the Father and Jesus Christ. We train them to be caring, loving and giving. We train them to navigate the culture they'll face, even after we're gone. The success of our training all hinges on our ability to train them in one aspect of their lives. This one thing will have an effect on their ability as a Christian son or daughter and in all other aspects of their lives. We have to train them to make good choices about sex. We have to train our children to analyze situations then discern the right decision to make.

God wants us to train our children in His way of life: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7, New International Version). We should be passing on the knowledge of His statutes and laws. The knowledge of God and His way will help our kids make good decisions.

One of the most important areas to talk to our kids about is sex. For some of us it can be an uncomfortable conversation. If it doesn't come from us someone else will bring up the subject. Whether at school, church or somewhere else, the subject of sex will come up among our children's peers.

The ability to make right decisions in this area of life is so important for our young people. This topic may be an easier conversation for some people than for others. It all depends on how we were raised and the relationships we've had with our own parents. But we have to talk to our children about sex because society has cheapened what God made for good.

Sex is a way of expressing love between husband and wife. This is made plain in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her . . . that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies . . . For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:25-31).

Yes, sex is what God designed for creating offspring, but expressing love and unity is also the purpose. God's intention for sex has been obscured, and we must make that clear to our children. God has an incredibly important, special place for sex, and that place is within marriage.

Many in our culture see sex as a fundamental human right or as just another bodily function. Society has devalued what is meant to be shared between one man and one woman in God's holy marriage covenant. Our culture teaches that sex is no big deal as long as two consenting adults are involved. The easy access everyone has to pornography cheapens sex and takes away from the deep intimacy God intended to be shared between husband and wife in sex. What's wrong with this thinking? This casual approach to sex creates negative, relationship-hurting side effects.

Society has devalued what is meant to be shared between one man and one woman in God's holy marriage covenant.

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, and Gabe Lyons, founder of Q, recently addressed this in their book *Good Faith*: "Instead of intimacy and emotional depth, sex any way you want it leads to anxiety, depression, loneliness, and insecurity. For some sex is no longer worth the trouble. Anything more than a one-night stand or port on demand requires a relationship, and the cost of a relationship is simply too high" (p. 126).

This is how society in general views sex and that view is growing more and more. It's simply a bodily function that can and should happen anytime we feel like it, and if you do it this way, you can avoid real relationships that can get messy.

This is not what God ever wanted for His children. God wanted us to connect in the way He designed because He knew what was good and right for us. God gave specific guidelines on when we can engage in sexual activity, and that is between a husband and his wife. We were designed to have desires, but we also need to practice self-control by being committed in marriage to that one person—our spouse. Knowing the strength of our desires, Paul wrote to Timothy, a young leader of the Church and said, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, who were dealing with sexual sin in the congregation: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

There are passages in the Bible warning us to refrain from sex outside of the design of marriage, but it also shows there is a time when it is completely acceptable and good. From the beginning, in the book of Genesis, God intended that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

God intended for two people to come together in marriage to share in a level of intimacy that isn't shared with anyone else.

A few years ago I read a book by Meg Meeker called *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: 10 Secrets Every Father Should Know*. Meeker talks a lot about the relationship she had with her father. She shared some of the talks and lessons they had that helped her to have strength when dealing with young guys who wanted to engage in sex before they were married. She says that deep down daughters want their fathers to give them rules and expectations. They are looking to their father for protection from harm. According to Meeker, daughters want permission to stay chaste and to have their parents' support in developing a strong set of morals: "What she [your daughter] wants to know from you is what the rules are. When is it appropriate to have sex and why? That's it. If that is all you ever impress upon her, it's good enough . . . Reiterate to her that sex isn't a simple bodily function—it is powerfully linked to her feelings, thoughts, and character. Tell her that a lot of what she hears and sees about sex is simply wrong. Keep it straightforward, loving, and respectable" (p. 95).

This understanding is much deeper than what your children will hear in society. Sex delves into a level of intimacy deeply connected to feelings and charac-

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God's Desire for His Church's Growth

Walking in the Fear of the Lord



Photo by Tamara Menzi/Unsplash

by Kevin Greer

What does it mean to walk in the fear of the Lord in a modern context?

What does it mean to fear God? A lot of people might use this phrase to talk tough, but what does the Bible actually say it means? According to the book of Acts, the earliest Christians almost 2,000 years ago walked "in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31). How can we walk this way in the modern day?

Reverence, Not Terror

How would you define the fear of God? Should we be paralyzed with terror in God's existence? Our English versions of the Bible do not convey the full meaning of the original languages. Fearing God means living in constant awe, respect and reverence of Him, knowing that He, the Eternal Creator, sees our every action and hears our every thought. It isn't fear as we use it today, such as being afraid of heights, snakes or spiders. It's not a phobia—it's a relationship founded on incredible respect.

God wants you to walk in the fear of Him. This implies continual action, not a passive sense of intrigue or some emotional burst of wonder. The fear of God should be a constant force permeating every aspect of your life. So what real-life actions can you and I take to learn the fear of the Lord?

1. Reflect On Creation

I had the opportunity to travel to Wisconsin this past winter, and I made a memory there that reminded me of this same point. I was hiking with a pastor in the cool, December woods. We had ventured down a hill and came to a half-frozen lake that stretched its arms all around us. The pastel winter landscape was more real than any matte painting, and we started to cross the water on a wooden bridge. Before we were even able to reach the other side, a bald eagle launched off a nearby tree and soared in front of us. He glided fearlessly through the crisp air into the frosty woods about a hundred yards away. It was a sight I won't soon forget.

This event reminded me that God is a wonderful Creator. With His brush He paints the sunsets, and with His permission the seasons change. He is so full of wisdom that He dots the universe with swirling galaxies and populates the tiniest speck of dust with complex cellular life—but the same physical laws He wrote govern them both. Even the most ordinary things have layers of God-fashioned complexity that we can only attempt to understand. Without a doubt, God's creation is beautiful.

I encourage you to meditate on God's creation. Even something as mundane as a commute home from work can be transformed by glancing at the majestic clouds in the sky or towering trees that line the highway. If you feel isolated from all this in an urban environment, consider walking around a local park. I also recommend seeking out nature documentaries that explore God's creation or even a weekend trip to a nearby nature center.

When we reflect on the creation, it's nearly impossible not to be filled with wonder and humility. King David considered God's creation, and asked, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:3-5). By realizing God's dominion and our smallness, we start to grow in the fear of the Lord.

2. Examine God's Word

When a builder sets out to construct a home, he needs his tools. In the same way, if we want to build on our foundation of fearing God, our most valuable tool is the Bible.

In ancient times, God described His expectations for Israel's rulers. One such expectation is stated in Deuteronomy 17:18, "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law [the first five books of the Bible] in a book." In those days, such an extensive and studious task would have to be done by hand.

Why would God ask this of an Israelite king? It was so "that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren" (Deuteronomy 17:19-20). God wanted these men to grow in their fear of Him by reading His Word.

God wants this from us still today. In doing so, we grow in the infinite wisdom that God has—the same wisdom that created the galaxies, bacteria and you and I. "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom," and the Proverbs are an excellent source of practical wisdom (Proverbs 15:33). A great, quick start down this road is to read the book of Proverbs. If you read one chapter every day, you'll finish the book in a month. By regularly examining God's Word, we walk in the fear of Him.

3. Put It Into Action Through Obedience

Imagine someone who wants to be better at basketball. They get a guidebook to help them learn the ropes. They read, study and take notes in this guidebook for weeks preparing for someone to ask them to play. Then, out of nowhere, some friends invite him to play a game, but he declines. All of the reading in the world means nothing unless we act on it, which is why point number three is to obey God.

The fear of God can motivate us to act. Noah was "moved with godly fear" when he ignored the society around him and built an ark as God instructed (Hebrews 11:7). Noah didn't just read or hear about what God said to do, he lived it.

Of course, Noah faced opposition and dissent, and you should expect no different. There will be trials and hardships even if you do the right thing. However: "The testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4). If you refuse to heed what those around you want you to do and instead follow God, you will grow in your fear of Him to the point where you "lack nothing."

God wants our utmost respect, awe, and reverence; He wants us to fear Him. We don't do this by cowering in the corner away from Him, but by drawing closer to Him and building a stronger relationship. Meditating on His handiwork leaves us filled with wonder and humility. His Word is a tool we use to get to know Him and learn what He expects of us. Our actions are proof that we fear Him enough to do what He says. Whether it's your first step or your 500th, let's all take a step forward and walk in the fear of God. UN

Local Church UPDATES

Greensboro Ladies Club Tea



The Greensboro, North Carolina, Ladies Club held its annual ladies tea after Sabbath service on May 7, 2016. The theme of the tea was "The Beauty of Friendship."

The speaker for the tea was Laura Scott. Mrs. Scott brought out many points on the five love languages. She also gave us a 60-second quiz on friendship within God's Church. Our main goal for ladies club is to have everyone involved in club activities, and the effort has paid off. The tea was enjoyed by all. Thanks, ladies, for a job well done.

Sadie Parks

Honoring Retiring Ministry

Roy and Norma Holladay

Roy Holladay retired after 53 years of full-time employment with the United Church of God on May 31, 2016, where he was serving as the operation manager of Ministerial and Member Services. The Chattanooga churches honored Roy and Norma Holladay for their years of faithful service on the Sabbath of May 22, 2016, where Mr. Kubik presented them with a commemorative crystal globe. Afterwards everyone enjoyed a cake reception.

The Holladays have pastored congregations throughout the United States, including in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Illinois, Florida, and Tennessee.

Roy Holladay was instrumental in the founding of the United Church of God, serving on the transitional board and later on the Council of Elders for nine years (acting as chairman for four-plus years). Mr. Holladay was the United Church of God president for three years (May 2002-July 2005). Over the years he was an ABC instructor and was a festival coordinator for nine years.

Longtime Friends and Work Colleagues Shared Their Thoughts:

Victor Kubik: "Roy and Norma Holladay have been some of the most considerate and fairest people that I have ever known. Both of them love to be with brethren and the ministry whom they gave their lives for. They believe the best in people. However, in his managerial work Roy was never afraid to face challenges and resolve problems. He was always thorough and deliberate before making judgments and speaking out.

"In his managerial roles whether chairman of the Council of Elders, Ministerial and Member Services operation manager, he is remembered as someone who got things done. He stayed with tasks until they came to conclusion.

"Roy underwent trials in his career and was not always treated kindly, but he never allowed himself to respond in kind. He was always aware of God's greater timetable and purpose. He is a living example of patience and faith. I value deeply the years that I worked alongside Roy. He is a giant, and we will be eternally friends."

Peter Eddington: "Mr. Holladay is one of the kindest men I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. As Church president he was very understanding of the work being done by the media department and fully supported our various efforts."

Gerald Seelig: "Having worked with Roy when he was either chairman, president or both, I always found him approachable. He would always listen—and hear you. He always took notes. He would verify and not just take someone's word. As my wife Connie says, 'You could disagree with Roy and he could still be your friend.'

"My wife and I admire Roy and Norma for many reasons. One that stands out is, when mistreated and/or attacked, they never retaliated. But they learned from it, especially how not to treat others. They both have firm foundations in the Word of God."

Matt Fenchel: "I had the privilege of assisting Roy Holladay during his tenure as UCG president and chairman of the Council. I quickly came to appreciate his humble approach to serving God and our brethren. His sermons are tremendously well researched and carefully planned—certainly a fine example to me as a more junior minister. He always took a personal interest in people, and I count him as one of my mentors to this day. The kind and generous spirit of Roy and Norma will remain with me always."



Photo by Victor Kubik

Roy and Norma Holladay

Roy and Norma Holladay Share Their Reflections:

Roy Holladay: "It has been a honor to work for God in his harvest for the last 53 years. The ministry is a calling to serve the family of God. That service is based upon a loving relationship. Like any family the people of God need to know you love them and care for them. Norma and I have served together as a team. She has a special ability to empathize and to relate to everyone she meets. Her example and assistance has helped me to grow in these areas.

"There are many lessons that you learn over the years. One lesson is that you can become so busy with activities that you can neglect what is really important: your relationship with God is most important—followed by your relationship with your family.

"Striving for advancement or a higher position should not be our motivation. I have found there is always much room for growth in whatever job I had."

Norma Holladay: "We have left our hearts and our love where we have lived and served God's Church. We have made many dear and precious friends during our 53 years of being in the ministry."

Roy and Norma Holladay celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary this past June. They have five sons and 13 grandchildren. They currently reside in Ooltewah, Tennessee. UN

Lisa Fenchel

Local Church UPDATES

Marriage Enrichment Workshop

The Columbia, Maryland, congregation hosted 19 couples who participated in a special two-day Marriage Enrichment Workshop. The workshop was held at the Comfort Inn Capital Beltway in Beltsville, Maryland, the weekend of May 21-22, 2016.

The weekend started with Sabbath services followed by biblically based marriage workshops on Sabbath afternoon and evening, and Sunday morning. The workshops were presented by pastor of the Dayton, Ohio, congregation, Frank McCrady, and his wife Sonja.

The couples received a scripturally sound and encouraging workshop. These 19 couples received resources to help lead them to a happy marriage, specifically how to apply the biblical principles. There were several opportunities for discussion between husbands and wives. Couples were even given homework to complete on Saturday night before the session on Sunday morning. Of course this homework was worthwhile as it could only benefit each couple if completed. These workshops helped couples with communication, building a better relationship with God, and ultimately, their spouses. Thank you to the McCradys for being willing to share their knowledge with all of the couples.

Rhonda Diggins



Church members who participated in the Marriage Enrichment Workshop in Maryland.

Honoring Retiring Home Office Employees

Alec and Donna Surratt

Alec Surratt

Alec Surratt is the supervisor of the international mailing department at the United Church of God, and he is retired from the home office in June of this year. He worked for the Church for 41 years as a full-time employee.

Alec's very first job for the Church was back in his college days when all students at Ambassador College were required to work during their time on campus. The job he held as a freshman was working with landscaping and working as a janitor. He jokes that these jobs were to test the incoming freshmen's attitude.

Alec started college in 1966 to study Spanish and had previous college experience before attending Ambassador. His next job wasn't a paid position. In his spare time he would visit the Spanish department and soon began to volunteer, mostly on Saturday nights and on Sundays. He read mail written in English that was sent from Latin America. Alec said the pile of letters was backed up for months, and there was a need for help in the department. However, he enjoyed doing this job, and that is why he continued to come in on weekends to volunteer. After graduation he was offered a full-time job in the Spanish department.

In 1968, an ad for the Spanish edition of *The Plain Truth* ran in an issue of *Reader's Digest*. Over the next few months, requests for the magazine grew from about 70 to 80,000. Alec had to learn how to read Spanish addresses quickly and correctly.

The original Spanish department was out of the Ambassador College Bricket Wood campus. When Charles Dorothy, who worked as head of the Spanish department in Bricket Wood, moved to Big Sandy, he brought along the department with him. All literature had British labels when the department moved, so Alec, along with others in the department, spent about two years relabeling every piece of literature.

In 1972, the Spanish department moved to Pasadena, California, so Alec and his wife Donna moved there as well. He worked there until 1995, when he was laid off from his position in the Spanish department.

For the next four years he worked for immigration in Dallas, Texas. Around 1999, Connie Seelig, who worked at the home office in Cincinnati, Ohio, needed help with international literature requests. Connie and Alec have been longtime friends, and she suggested he help out. Alec worked remotely before moving to Cincinnati to be the supervisor of the international mailing department. He worked at the home office in Cincinnati since 2000.

Alec tells an inspiring story of one of the first members of the Church from Colombia in the 1960s. His name was William Fly. He owned a wealthy coffee plantation, and Alec first met him at the Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy in the 60s. William had so much faith and determination for the truth. He wanted desperately to be baptized and would only hire people to work for him if they read through the *Bible Study Course* first. In a way, he introduced many people to the truth. He died in 1972, but William Fry's story has always inspired Alec.

Donna Surratt

Donna Surratt is the international mail fulfillment clerk and retired in June as well. Donna performed file maintenance and letter reading in English and Spanish. She worked for the Church for 29 years, and she is married to Alec Surratt.

Donna's first job was in the kitchen when she was a student at Ambassador College in Big Sandy, where she received her very first paycheck. While still attending college she worked in the mail reading area and later volunteered in the Spanish department. In the Spanish department she read mail written in English that came from Latin America and the Caribbean.

In January 1979, she was hired full-time in the Spanish department at the Big Sandy campus. Donna didn't know Spanish when she started working in the Spanish department. She took one semester of Spanish, and according to Donna she learned the language "through a lot of prayer and a dictionary." It took a few years, but she eventually learned to read Spanish and learned to understand it when it was spoken. However, she never really learned how to speak it.

Donna worked for the Spanish department until February 1995. In February of that year she was laid off with the entire Spanish department for not following the changed beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God.

For the next five years she worked for immigration in Dallas, Texas, along with Alec. In 2000, Donna moved with her husband to Cincinnati because he accepted a job at the home office. Two years later in 2002, Donna received the international mail fulfillment clerk job at the home office and has worked there since.

Donna said that just about every job she had was because Alec worked there first and put in a good word for her. She never had to even apply for her jobs.

The Surratts do love to travel. Alec's favorite place is Hawaii. He likes the idea to just get lost and climb the mountains. Donna's favorite place to travel is Latin America. She says the people are just so warm and wonderful there. They have met so many people there over the years that the brethren and their friends wouldn't even let them stay in hotels. The Surratts have spent a lot of time in Mexico for Alec's job. He had to help train people working in the mailing department there.

The Surratts plan on moving to Oklahoma for their retirement.

There have been many stories and adventures over the years working for the Church, but it has all been worth it for the Surratts. They will be greatly missed by the home office staff.



Photo by Linda Merrick

Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services manager and Victor Kubik, president, award the Surratts with a card, keepsake bookends, and a photo of all home office employees that was also signed by employees.

Longtime Friends and Work Colleagues Shared Their Thoughts:

Mario Seiglie: "I have the privilege of having known Alec and Donna Surrat since 1971, when, as a young student, I attended Ambassador College, Big Sandy. Alec already worked in the Spanish Department and I worked for him in my last year of AC in Pasadena. He was quite patient with me as I came up to speed with my Spanish and always got back to me quickly when I had a question. He was virtually a walking encyclopedia about Latin America and its frequently convoluted addresses. He has such a passion for his work, and thousands of Latin American brethren corresponded with him at one time or another.

"It has been a tremendous pleasure to work with both Alec and Donna through the years, and I have greatly admired their calm, easy-going, but very efficient manner. They have been very supportive of United through the difficult times and have had a rock-solid faith, looking not primarily to men, but to God the Father and Jesus Christ for their guidance.

We will greatly miss both of them!"

Connie Seelig: "I've worked on and off with Alec for 47 years. He was working in the Spanish department in Big Sandy, Texas, when I was hired as a freshman in college. Donna and Alec were so good to a poor college graduate waiting to get her first paycheck. They actually fed me lunches those first two weeks.

"When the home office moved to Cincinnati in 1998, I was the only employee in mail processing. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed, even though our mail volume was much less than it is now. We were mailing about 300 envelopes a week back then. But with only one employee trying to handle incoming and outgoing mail, plus process all the donation mail, it was a lot. There wasn't a lot of time to handle the international mail, which kept growing. Alec was living in Dallas at the time, and when we needed help with the international mail, he was the first one to come to my mind, because I knew his love of geography and atlases. Thankfully, he was willing to help us remotely at first. But as the international mail kept growing, we needed him here in Cincinnati, so thankfully he was willing to come.

"It was a special bonus to hire Donna later, because she has such a gift for detail work and investigation of address formatting of international countries. They will be greatly missed. It is hard to give 47-plus years of experience to someone else. But they did a good job of training their replacements, Josh Raudenbush and David Salek, and I look forward to working with both." UN

Linda Merrick

Israel Passover Tour

by Lewis VanAusdle

It was truly a blessing to see this place a second time and to be able to share it with others, some of whom were seeing it for the first time. My wife, Lena, and I were joined by nine others from the United States to travel to as many places in Israel as we could in a short amount of time, on as small a budget, and within reason of comfort and cleanliness. The trip was officially sponsored by the United Youth Corps, but each participant was expected to completely cover their own expenses. We had the pleasure of being accompanied by two young couples from the Church presently living and working in Israel. They were an immense help in coordinating meals, planning and giving tours, and securing clean and inexpensive hostels to stay in.

We spent the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed, and the First and Last Days of Unleavened Bread together. As we sat in our upper room, not in Jerusalem but not far from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in Tel Aviv, it was a somber oasis from the reality of the chaos of the city outside. Even in the land where Jesus walked, where He preached, and where He healed many, there are few who heed His words. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23).

As well as spending God's appointed Holy Days in the land where He placed His name, we also saw the land itself. There are many stories to be told about every place we visited in Israel. Not only stories from the Word of God and the journeys of His chosen people, but also of many people who have walked this land throughout history, both ancient and modern. From the shores of the Sea of Galilee where Peter walked on water, to the ancient and modern parts of Jerusalem where Christ was crucified, and even as far down as the deserts beyond the Dead Sea stretching to the southernmost tip of the country, Israel is a sight to behold.



Some of the participants of the Israel tour.

Certain parts, like the Jezreel Valley, are green and fruitful, a reminder of God's promise of a land that "truly flows with milk and honey" and of the armies that will fill the very same valley in the end times (Numbers 13:27; Revelation 19:19, 16:16). There are cities by the shores of the Mediterranean like Caesarea where nations captured other nations and built their cities there. In contrast to all other places is the old city of Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth will one day come "to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16). The Mount of Olives, covered by thousands of graves, stands across the Kidron Valley to the east waiting to be split in two by the return of Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:4).

Peter, the apostle wrote, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). We did follow Christ's steps on this trip, walking where He walked and learning where He taught. Our Heavenly Father kept us safe even during this difficult time when the nation of Israel is constantly under threat from its neighbors. But like King David, our God is our "stronghold" and "refuge" and we can "call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised" and He will keep us safe from our enemies no matter where we are (2 Samuel 22:3-4). UN

Read Lewis VanAusdle's blogs about Israel here:

www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/lewvan/1/tpod.html

The Hoefkers Visit Brethren in Colombia



Church services in Monteria, Colombia.

Scott and Gayle Hoefker made their annual trip to Colombia for the Passover season. The brethren in Colombia normally receive a visit from them three times a year. For the rest of the year, they are without a pastor, yet they remain faithful to this way of life.

The Hoefkers say that they rely heavily on God on each pastoral visit they make. "We pray for physical protection; we pray that our luggage arrives; we pray for safe airplanes and flights; we pray for safety in ground transportation; we pray for safe and healthy food; we pray for our physical health; we pray for spiritual insight and wisdom; we pray for protection for anything that could harm us. We know that many of you pray for us when we are on our trips; for these prayers we are extremely grateful. We need to rely on God for everything, because without Him, we are nothing."

Read Mrs. Hoefker's blogs about Colombia here:

www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/gayle_hoefker/18/tpod.html

This concept of relying on God is shown throughout the blog updates Mrs. Hoefker shared on her TravelPod blog. Here is a brief summary of their time in Colombia.

They began the trip in Bogotá for a night. This allowed them to drop off supplies for the Passover and spend some time with Jaime and Janet Salek. Mr. Salek is the ministerial assistant in Bogotá. The brethren in Bogotá like to use matzos for the Passover, but they have an extremely difficult time finding them. As for the rest of the country, it is virtually impossible to find them.

The next stop was Monteria, Colombia. Here the Hoefkers were able to spend time with brethren and talk about plans for the Feast of Tabernacles. They wanted to hear ideas and thoughts about the activities, what the brethren might like to do in the future, and things to consider in planning an activity.

Please see page 15

Announcements



Malachi Winter Schulz

Born Mar. 23, 2016



Thomas Stimson & Michelle Schroer

May 22, 2016



Gary & Sue Evans

50th Wedding Anniversary



Art & Rilla Morris

60th Wedding Anniversary

Births

Malachi Winter Schulz

Devin and Tiffany Schulz, from the Springfield, Missouri, congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, Malachi Winter Schulz. He was born at 1:00 a.m. on March 23, 2016. He was 8 lbs., 4 oz. and 20.5 in. long. Malachi is the first baby in the local congregation in many years, so his arrival was greatly anticipated. We look forward to sharing the blessing of the new addition to our physical family with all of our spiritual family.

Weddings

Thomas Wayne Stimson and Michelle Rae Schroer

On May 22, 2016, Thomas Wayne Stimson and Michelle Rae Schroer were married at the Flint, Michigan, congregation by Malcolm Murray. They were surrounded and supported by the congregation and each of their families. Tom has been a baptized member since July 2015, and Michelle was baptized in November 2010. They met at church services in early spring 2015, and through joys and trials built an incredible friendship over the year. Together they have 10 children and nine grandchildren, with one on the way. Tom and Michelle spent their honeymoon exploring the east coastline of Michigan, visiting four of the 129 Michigan lighthouses, a great start to the goal of seeing them all. A marriage full of life and God-given blessings, and most of all His love.

Anniversaries

Gary and Sue Evans

Gary and Sue (Brown) Evans were married on June 18, 1966, in West Union, Ohio. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 22, 2016. They have five children: Rhonda, Gary, Daniel, David, and Rebekah; 11 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Art and Rilla Morris

Art and Rilla Morris celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on March 26, 2016, hosted by the Mansfield, Ohio, congregation and family members.

The couple married on March 24, 1956, in Deavertown, Ohio, near the bride's home. They met in 1953 while Art attended Ohio State University and Rilla attended Bliss Business College in Columbus, Ohio.

When Art's draft for the Korean War became imminent, he enlisted in Aviation Cadet Training (forerunner of the Air Force Academy.) He graduated with a Second Lt.'s commission and a navigator's rating. During this time Rilla worked as a bookkeeper at Huntington Bank in Columbus, Ohio.

After their wedding, the couple moved to Sacramento, California, where Art received his Aircraft Performance Engineer's rating. They then moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where Art was stationed at Carswell Air Force Base. He flew B-36 bombers in the Strategic Air Command, attaining the rank of captain. After Art was discharged from active duty in 1959, he worked in various management positions at Barnes Pumps (later acquired by Crane Pumps and Systems) located in Mansfield, Ohio.

Settling on a farm overlooking Pleasant Hill Lake near Perrysville, Ohio, the couple raised beef cattle and grew large gardens. Some of their favorite memories on the farm include hosting hay rides and picnics for both family reunions and Church members.

Art and Rilla began attending the Radio Church of God in July of 1966, and both were baptized on Dec. 24, 1966. Art was ordained as an elder on Dec. 6, 1980. They serve in the Mansfield congregation of the United Church of God. They have enjoyed traveling to many Feast sites, among which Alaska and Hawaii hold special memories.

Art retired from Crane Pumps and Systems on Jan. 6, 2016, after 57 years of service. Rilla recently retired from Mohican Valley Transport, Inc. (a family-owned business) where she served as the bookkeeper for 22 years.

Art and Rilla have three children: Jeff Morris of Perrysville, Ohio; Loretta Hardiman of Galion, Ohio; and Linda (Roger) Daniels of Big Sandy, Texas. They have been blessed with seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Since their retirement, the couple is enjoying farm activities with their son's longhorn cattle operation, growing flowers and relaxing at their private lake and cabin.

Obituaries

Margaret Christianson

Margaret Christianson, long-time member in Tucson, Arizona, was peacefully delivered to her rest on Monday morning, Dec. 7, 2015, shortly before noon. After a physical lifetime that lasted more than 93 years, next up is her resurrection to a better life than she or anyone else could ever imagine.

Margaret was a young woman of 19 on Dec. 7, 1941, the date that lives in infamy, when Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States was propelled into World War II. In the early months of 1942, the young men were called to duty, and Margaret was one of the women who stepped into a man's job. She was a real-life "Rosie the Riveter," attaching fasteners to B-17 and B-29 bombers at Boeing Aviation in Seattle, Washington. When her own young man returned after two years of active duty, they married and started a family together. Predeceased by her husband, Margaret was "Mom" to five sons and a daughter, and "Granma" to 10 grandsons and three granddaughters, and she stopped counting when the great-grandchildren kept coming! Her large extended family also included siblings, their children, cousins, and lifelong friends who were grafted in as relatives. For a woman short of stature, Margaret had a large heart and a wide arm span, always open for hugs.

The hub of activity at Margaret's home was her kitchen. She had a deliciously secret recipe for her spaghetti sauce, and



Margaret Christianson

1922 - Dec. 7, 2015

she was known for her versatility in preparing chicken. She had hundreds of recipes and was always on the lookout for a new taste sensation. She also had a flair for creating pastries—her honey roses were a family favorite. Outside the home, Margaret was a fan of Major League Baseball. The last game she attended was of her favorite team, the Atlanta Braves, when they played in Phoenix in May of 2013.

As a member of the Church of God for over 50 years, Margaret held fast to her God and practiced a lifestyle in accordance with His teaching. A stroke several years ago resulted in near deafness and challenges with her equilibrium. Being unable to hear the sermon or to fellowship satisfactorily brought her regular attendance at Sabbath services to an end. But Margaret looked forward to *The Good News* magazine and enjoyed reading the monthly congregational bulletin. She also cherished the cards and notes she received from the brethren.

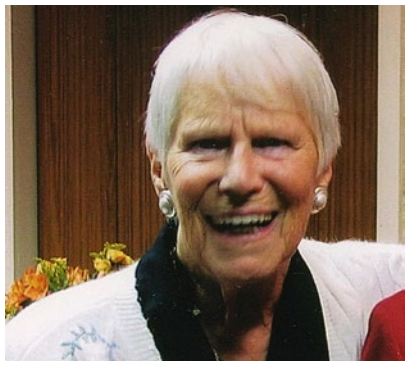
Announcements: Send us announcements from your local congregation! Have your pastor review what you write, and send it in to UN@ucg.org. We're looking for 100- to 300-word articles and photos with captions. Please double-check the spelling of names, and include the author's and photographer's names. **E-mail is preferred**, but we will also take physical mail as well! Please include a self-addressed envelope if you'd like photos returned.

Announcements



Wayne Diggins

June 14, 1936 - Feb. 24, 2016



Eleanor F. Getz

Oct. 28, 1925 - Feb. 28, 2016

Wayne Diggins

Wayne Edwards Diggins of Baltimore, Maryland died on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2016, at the age of 79, after a two-year battle with cancer. He began attending church services with the Worldwide Church of God in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1968 with his wife, Jean and four children. He was also baptized that year.

Wayne and Jean had two more children in the 1970s. Then in 1995 he became a member of the United Church of God. Wayne has been a pillar in the Columbia, Maryland, congregation, where he faithfully attended services with his wife, three of his children, a daughter-in-law, four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. One grandchild attends with United Church of God in Chicago, Illinois. Wayne was known by many brethren as a happy, friendly man who greeted them with a smile, a handshake, or a hug.

Wayne and Jean were able to celebrate 60 years of marriage with 27 family members on Sunday, Feb. 21, 2016, just three days prior to his passing.

He is survived by his wife Jean, six children and their spouses, 12 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and two younger brothers.

A funeral service was held on Tuesday, March 1, and was attended by many Church members.

Eleanor F. Getz

Eleanor F. Getz, 90, died on Sunday, Feb. 28, 2016, at Brookdale Senior Living in Hillsborough, New Jersey. Mrs. Getz was born in Baltimore, Maryland, the daughter of Phillip and Marcella Rossbach. She relocated to Somerset, New Jersey, in 1962, and moved in 2007 to Whitehouse Station, before settling at Brookdale Senior Living. Eleanor was a registered nurse for St. Peter's Medical Center, where she worked for many years. She was involved in the Somerset County 4H Club, was a Cub Scout den mother, and an avid bowler, coaching children's bowling from 1973 to 1983.

Mrs. Getz was a longtime member of God's Church. She attended with the United Church of God congregation in Central New Jersey until 2011, after which she would occasionally visit the Philadelphia congregation when her health would permit. When she could no longer attend in person, she would spend every Sabbath at her home at the senior living center, dressed in her very finest, iPad in hand, logged on to webcast services from Cincinnati.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband Gordon Getz and three brothers. She is survived by four sisters, eight children, 21 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren (with one more on the way).

Local Church UPDATES

Columbia, Maryland, Honors 19 Senior Brethren



Seniors of the Columbia, Maryland, congregation and the York, Pennsylvania, congregation.

The Columbia, Maryland, congregation honored 19 senior citizens from their local congregation and the York, Pennsylvania, congregation at their eighth annual senior dinner.

The dinner began after church services on the Sabbath of June 4, 2016, with some of the youth from the congregation singing "All Things Bright and Beautiful" to welcome the guests. A few of the ladies in the congregation prepared dishes, and a few of the teens and young adults served a meal that included a salad of mixed greens, chicken marsala, a green bean medley, and mashed potatoes, with a side of polenta. Fresh fruit-topped pound cake slices completed the meal.

Each guest was given a scripture card made by the children in the congregation, and the glass that their dessert was served in. The seniors were addressed by Steve Diggins as he thanked them for their years of service and how they are now able to use their knowledge and experience to give encouragement and advice to the younger members of the congregation.

Rhonda Diggins

Charlotte Honors Its Sabbath School Graduates



Scott Hoefker, minister of the Charlotte congregation, and Maria Petty, pose for a photo with the Sabbath school graduates.

The Charlotte, North Carolina, congregation held its annual Sabbath school graduation on May 28 during the sermonette portion of Sabbath services. This year we had nine graduates from the program, seven of whom were present. In total, Scott Hoefker awarded certificates of achievement to Anne McCormack, Priscilla Petty, Carter Bratnick, Macy Overcash, Genevieve Colón, Isabella Kegresse, Alyvia Whiteside, Bailey Tino and Vivian Colón.

Their instructor, Maria Petty, and her assistant, RJ Yacu, also received gifts of appreciation for their dedication and hard work. In addition, our 2016 high school graduate, Christina Petty, received a gift certificate and a card, signed by everyone in the congregation, to honor her achievement.

Ailsa Braun

Ann Arbor, Michigan, Enjoys Unleavened Cookies

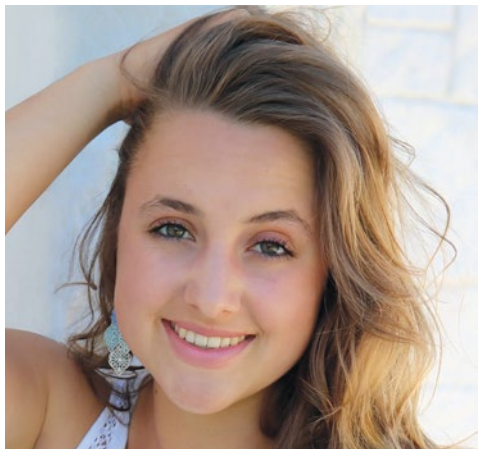
After an inspiring sermon on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, April 23, the Ann Arbor and Detroit, Michigan congregations enjoyed a delicious array of assorted homemade unleavened cookies and dessert bars made with love by our membership. We had a wonderful time rejoicing together as the family of God.

Randy D'Alessandro



Congratulations Seniors!

Class of 2016



Rachel Arner



Luke Barker



Sydney Bose



Kiley Burton



Nathan Baker



Michaela Ann Born



Ryder Michale Briggs

Graduate's Name

2. Parents' Names
3. Congregation
4. School, work, internship, co-op or other accomplishments
5. Interests, interesting facts about him or her, Church activities involved in, hobbies, unusual skills, etc.
6. Plans after graduation
7. Additional comments (favorite Scripture, favorite quote, motto, advice, poetry, wisdom, etc.)

Rachel Arner

2. Stephen and Lisa Arner

3. Salt Lake City, Utah

4. Rachel graduated from Weber High School with honors while taking AP and concurrent coursework for college. She ran cross country and track and played varsity lacrosse. She also played comp and rec soccer. She plays piano and accompanies hymns for church.

6. She will be attending Utah State University in the fall.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Always be confident in your abilities and always try new things!"

Favorite Scripture: "Commit your works unto the LORD and your thoughts will be established" (Proverbs 16:3).

Nathan Baker

2. Dan and Linda Baker

3. Mansfield, Ohio

4. Nathan graduates from high school this June. He was homeschooled through all 12 grades and earned an ACT score in the top 95th percentile nationwide.

5. Nathan is actively involved in the Church community, serving on the sound crew in his local congregation, attending teen speech club, and volunteering at preteen Camp Buckeye. He also teaches tae kwon do with the outreach group where he earned his black belt.

An accomplished pianist and avid drummer, Nathan is keenly interested in music of many genres. His other favorite activities include art, exercise, and spending time with his friends at church, camp and other activities.

6. This fall, he will begin classes at the Ohio State University, double-majoring in psychology and business.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Luke Barker

2. Ron and Janet Barker

3. Dayton, Ohio

4. Luke will graduate from Greeneview High School. Luke currently works at Ralph Lauren Factory Store. His accomplishments include: honor roll (9-12), OHC scholar athlete, varsity boy's tennis (10-12), OHC honorable mention, Camp Kern counselor and Camp Buckeye assistant counselor, and a recipient of the Kenny Hauprich Memorial Scholarship.

5. Luke's hobbies, special interests, and church activities include: Camp Cotubic, tennis, racquetball, traveling, sound crew for Sabbath services, and he enjoys learning about history, especially World War II.

6. He plans to attend Wright State University to become an aerospace engineer.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "In the end it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years."—Abraham Lincoln

Favorite Scripture: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14).

Michaela Ann Born

2. Beth Born

3. Rome, Georgia

4. Graduated from Central High School in Carrollton, Georgia.

5. Michaela loves United Youth Camps and plans to attend this last time at Camp Cotubic. She also enjoys helping with the little children in her local congregation.

6. Her aspiration is to find employment working with children or animals.

Sydney Bose

3. Phoenix, Arizona

4. In high school, she was involved in dance, tumbling and cheer.

5. She loves attending Camp Hye Sierra each summer. She enjoys rescuing animals, playing tennis, and spending time with her dog, Franklin.

6. Her plans after graduation include attending college and then attending Ambassador Bible College at some point in the near future.

7. *Favorite quote:* "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing"—Walt Disney.

Ryder Michale Briggs

2. Robby Briggs and Lori Mitchell, stepmom Edna Briggs

3. Atlanta, Georgia

4. Ryder graduated from Sequoyah High School with honors and four years of an A grade average. He has received: academic letter, Lamp of Knowledge award, varsity basketball letter, Scholar Athlete award, and he is a certified Autodesk revit user (three years of architecture courses).

5. His hobbies include playing basketball and tennis.

6. He plans to attend Kennesaw State University in the fall and major in engineering (undecided).

Kiley Burton

2. Matthew and Lory Wilkes and Jeff Burton

3. Columbus, Georgia

4. Kiley's accomplishments include: dual enrollment student, class valedictorian, Beta Club for the past three years, as well as being an Honor Society student.

5. Her interests are softball and volleyball for seven years and United Youth Camps every summer for the past six years.

6. Her plans are to finish up her core classes at the local community college and then transfer to Georgia Tech to pursue a degree in computer science.

7. *Favorite scripture:* "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).



Megan Cortelyou



Margarita Olga Antonia Efimov



Zachary Fenger



Mikaela Gannon



Justin Michael Franke



John Gomperts

Megan Cortelyou

2. Shawn and Beth Cortelyou

3. Elkhart, Indiana, and Munster, Indiana

4. Megan has been homeschooled by her wonderfully patient mother since 4th grade. She graduated from high school with 30 college credits from Purdue University.

5. Megan cannot figure out whether her main hobby is reading or simply collecting books in the hopes of someday reading them. At any rate, she enjoys both hobbies immensely, despite the guilt sometimes inflicted upon her by the constantly growing piles and lists of books which she may never find the time to read. Megan has several other hobbies and is so easily and self-sufficiently entertained that she can't remember ever being bored in her life.

6. For the past couple years, Megan has been apprenticing at a local antique clock repair shop. This year, she will be working there full-time, exploring the option of specializing in cuckoo clock repair. After a year, she will decide whether she wants to attend full-time college or continue in the clock repair profession.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you" (1 Samuel 12:24).

Margarita "Mara" Olga Antonia Efimov

2. Bryan and Patricia (Rivera) Efimov

3. Dallas, Texas

4. Mara is a member of the first graduating class of Imagine International Academy of North Texas, an international baccalaureate (IB) world school. She completed both its MYP and full DP IB program. Mara received numerous IB, academic and leadership awards during high school. She was VP of her school's National Honor Society, head social community chair for the student council, was selected as a student blogger and student liaison, and co-founded Imagine's DP Book Club. She fenced, played volleyball, participated in Thespian Society, HOSA (fifth place regional winner), mock trial, Academic WorldQuest, plays the piano and flute, has studied dance since the age of 4 and loves to read. She volunteered at rehab facilities, a local hospital, and was an intern with a genetic research company.

She attended numerous Church camps and was a volunteer for Sabbath school and preteen camps. Mara would like to thank her family, teachers and extended Church family for all their support and encouragement.

6. During the summer of junior year, she received scholarships to study at Wake Forest and Ohio State University's H.S. medical program. Mara was named an AP Scholar with Distinction, Bonner Scholar and at graduation received the class "Award for Excellence in Humanities and Historical Investigation." She was blessed to receive a full scholarship, including study abroad, to Washington and Lee University in Virginia.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him" (Proverbs 30:5).

Zachary Fenger

2. Jerry and Laura Fenger

3. Cincinnati East, Ohio

4. Junior and senior year of high school Zachary was enrolled in the college credit plus program through the University of Cincinnati. He worked at Panera Bread and currently works at RDI Marketing.

5. He likes to play piano and guitar, and he enjoys playing sports such as basketball, volleyball, baseball and football. He loves the Winter Family Weekend with sports, friends and family.

6. Starting in the fall of 2016 he will attend the University of Cincinnati, studying mechanical engineering technology (B.S.). During this time he will also co-op with different companies in the tri-state.

7. *Advice:* "Keep up with your grades because it matters as far as getting into a degree that you want."

Favorite scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Justin Michael Franke

2. Shari Franke

3. Soldotna, Alaska

4. Justin graduated from Connections Home School and works construction in the summer. His accomplishments are: He earned his second degree black belt in karate, practiced nine years of piano and composed some of his own music, he participated in a college head start program, and he performs special music for the local church congregation. He also performed for other events, including his graduation.

5. His interest and hobbies are: sports of all kinds, health and fitness, martial arts, dancing, cooking, traveling, spending time with family and friends, music, snow skiing, surfing and ice skating. Church activities include: performing special music, serving on the clean-up and take-down crew and helping with special events.

6. Justin has been accepted to the engineering program at University of Alaska and will be attending this fall. He also plans on attending ABC sometime in the future.

7. *Favorite quote:* "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

Favorite scripture: "To whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

Mikaela Gannon

2. Barry and Elise Gannon

3. Shrewsbury, Missouri

4. Mikaela graduated high school on May 28, 2016, from Heritage Classical Christian Academy. Throughout the four years, Mikaela maintained over a 4.0 GPA and played for the varsity basketball team, on which she served as captain her senior year. She was also selected by her classmates and the school faculty to address the senior class at her graduation ceremony. Mikaela is active at her hometown congregation in Shrewsbury, where she attends church with her parents. She has also been a regular at Camp Pinecrest for many years.

5. Her hobbies and interests include reading, Shakespeare, history, and playing piano and drums. Mikaela will work in the family business this summer and attend college in the fall.

John Gomperts

2. John and Mariora Gomperts

3. San Diego, California

4. John is graduating from Carlsbad High School with honors and a 4.3 GPA. He also received a Home Depot college scholarship. John has worked as a math tutor and currently works at Legoland California. John loves athletics and was able to compete in basketball and volleyball during high school. Ping-pong, soccer and surfing are also some of his favorite activities. John has volunteered to coach youth basketball during local summer camps.

5. This will be John's fifth year attending Camp Hye Sierra, the highlight of every summer. He intends to return as a staff member next year. John serves by teaching Sabbath school and volunteering for preteen camp staff at Big Bear Mountain. He also enjoys serving during various Feast activities.

6. John was recently accepted to San Diego State University, a long-held goal finally achieved. He will start attending this fall.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Talent is God-given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be Careful."—John Wooden.

Favorite Scripture: "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).



Katie Hauck



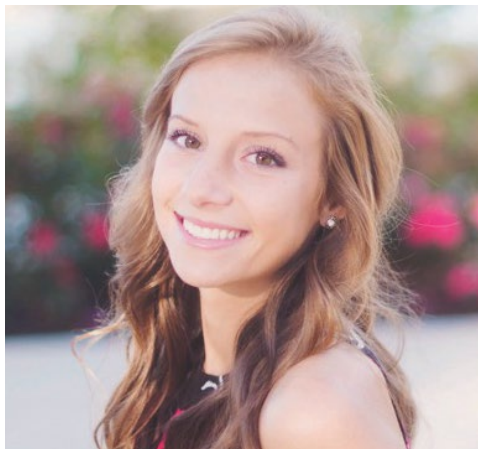
Marissa Rose Horton



Victoria Phelps



M. Winston Snyder



Kendall Hermann



Logan Erik McKeon



Rachel Richards

Katie Hauck

2. Michael and Sarah Hauck

3. Chicago, Illinois

4. Graduated from Wauconda High School with high honors and a 4.0 GPA.

5. She is involved in teen speech club and volunteers as a camp counselor. She loves to sing and read.

6. Katie will be double majoring in criminal justice and psychology with the intent to later achieve a paralegal certificate.

7. *Favorite quote:* "We do not remember days, we remember moments."—Cesare Pavese.

Kendall Hermann

2. Karl and Lori Hermann

3. Fort Wayne, Indiana

4. Kendall graduated from Leo Junior/Senior High School with a 4.0 GPA and was a part of the National Honor Society. She played on the school's volleyball team freshman and sophomore year. She was involved in the drama department on the hair and makeup crew. She interned at Indiana Physical Therapy her senior year.

5. Kendall enjoys volleyball and hiking. She plays hymns at church and loves going to church camps and different Feast sites.

6. Kendall plans on going to Trine University in Angola, Indiana, for her first year to begin her degree in exercise science. She will then transfer to the University of Indianapolis, where she will continue her degree in exercise science as well as complete a physical therapy assistant program.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Marissa Rose Horton

2. Joe and Tina Horton

3. Cleveland, Ohio

4. Working since age 14 at McDonald's and now Bob Evans.

5. She loves the camp experience, attending every year, and she has been staff at Camp Buckeye as well. She enjoys music, art, and movies (especially Disney marathons). She has sung special music on many occasions, and she enjoys talking with all age groups at Church.

6. Attending Cuyahoga Community College in the fall with an undecided major.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "There are far better things ahead, than what we leave behind."—C.S. Lewis.

Favorite Scripture: "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Logan Erik McKeon

2. Scott and Carrie McKeon

3. Phoenix, Arizona

4. Logan graduated from Cactus Shadows High School in Cave Creek, Arizona, on May 19, 2016.

5. While in high school, Logan was a varsity swimmer and varsity tennis player. He was also the swim captain his senior year. Logan is involved in speakers club at church as well as helping with hall set up for church services.

6. Logan attended college classes in the afternoon of his junior and senior year, completing his first year of college at the time of graduation. Logan received a scholarship to Arizona State University where he was accepted into the W.P. Carey School of Business. He is planning on majoring in accounting.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Victoria Phelps

2. Duane and Lisa Phelps

3. Cincinnati East, Ohio

4. Victoria graduated from Ohio Virtual Academy. While in high school, she was a member of National Honor Society, made the High Honor Roll, was Student of the Month, and received blue ribbons at two science fairs. She also earned the American Heritage Girls' Stars and Stripes award, which is equivalent to the Boy Scouts' Eagle Scout award.

5. Victoria has been dancing for 14 years, which has included training in ballet, tap, and jazz, among other styles. She enjoys a variety of other activities including reading, writing, baking, and skiing and snowboarding. She also participated in American Heritage Girls, Creative Writing Club, and Star Wars Club. Some of her favorite Church activities included the Cincinnati East Winter Volleyball League, teen speech club hosted by the Columbus, Ohio, congregation, Feasts, and summer camps. She has enjoyed attending Camp Cotubic and preteen Camp Buckeye and Camp UCanDo, as well as serving on staff at Buckeye and UCanDo.

6. Victoria has been accepted to the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College, where she plans to pursue a degree in electronic media technology.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Nothing ever happens like you imagine it will . . . But then again, if you don't imagine, nothing ever happens at all"—John Green.

Favorite Scripture: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Rachel Richards

2. Jeff and Lisa Richards

3. Bend, Oregon

4. Rachel is graduating a year ahead of schedule. She is a member of Japanese Honors Society, Japanese Club, and is a member of her high school choir council. Rachel is graduating with a 4.2 GPA and has received 24 credits at the college level.

5. Rachel runs the sound system at church and serves in many other ways. She enjoys singing, studying foreign languages and attending and serving at church camps. Rachel is particularly skilled at making people laugh, uplifting and encouraging her friends, and finding the determination to accomplish her goals.

6. After graduation Rachel will be working at her local community college and plans to continue her college education, eventually receiving her degree in mechanical engineering.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

M. Winston Snyder

2. Michael and Jamie Snyder

3. Indianapolis, Indiana

4. Winston graduated from Traders Point Christian Academy on June 5. During Winston's high school career he was named as school representative to the U.S. Senator Richard Lugar Symposium for Tomorrow's Leaders (sponsored by the University of Indianapolis) and was a two-time finalist for the Indianapolis Optimist International Club's regional speech competition. Winston served as an intern in Carmel, Indiana, Mayor Jim Brainard's office, working in economic development and was a member of the volunteer staff at the Indiana State Museum. In the summer of 2013, Winston traveled to Vinogradov, Ukraine, to serve on the education camp staff for the



Jordanne Ariel Stetter



Elizabeth Ann Sylvester



Natalie Paige Thouvenin



Alan Waterhouse

LifeNets Ukraine summer camp program there. Before his senior year Winston was a member of his student council and was a student class leader.

5. Favorite church activities include the various UCG proms in Ohio and Tennessee, as well as great memories from camps in the Pacific Northwest and Ohio. He worked as volunteer staff on the UCG preteen Camp UCanDo in Indianapolis. Winston enjoys watching and reading biographies of great leaders and history, and counts bicycling, hiking, fishing and playing piano as his hobbies.

6. He plans to attend Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) and major in business and pre-law.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."—Abraham Lincoln.

Jordanne Ariel Stetter

2. William Stetter and Jacqueline Pachinger-Stetter

3. San Antonio, Texas

4. Jordanne is a homeschool graduate from Hill Country Academy, where she holds a 3.83 GPA. She graduated with honors. While in high school she completed a five-year veterinary assistant program in cooperation with Texas A&M University and Texas 4-H and is currently working as a veterinary assistant. She has earned the three highest awards given in 4-H (the bronze, silver and gold star awards) for her leadership, community service and dedication to her education.

6. Jordanne plans to begin her college career in the Alamo College system and then transfer to Texas A&M to complete a degree in agriculture. She loves photography, reading and exploring the great outdoors.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid, and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you" (Deuteronomy 31:6, The Living Bible version).

Favorite Quote: "Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway."

Elizabeth Ann Sylvester

2. Don and Linda Sylvester

3. Ann Arbor, Michigan

4. Elizabeth graduated from Howell High School on June 4, 2016. The ceremony was held at the Breslin Center, part of the Michigan State Campus. Elizabeth participated in the co-op program, working part-time at a local restaurant during her senior year. She was given the honor of co-op Student of the Month for March.

5. She enjoys writing short stories and putting her imagination on paper, making English her favorite subject. She also enjoys reading, movies, video gaming and her dog, Koby. Her favorite foods are pizza and chicken.

6. Elizabeth has plans to attend Lansing Community College to pursue her degree in business. She would also like to attend ABC in the future.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1).

Natalie Paige Thouvenin

2. Scott and Sherry Thouvenin

3. Cambridge, Ohio

4. Throughout her homeschooling years she has participated in various volunteer opportunities including: playing piano at a local nursing home, assisting the librarians at the district library, and leading tours as a costumed demonstrator at Historic Schoenbrunn Village.

5. She has treasured participating as teen staff at Camp Buckeye and Camp Ironwood. She loves being a part of the Cambridge congregation.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).

William Ray Urwiller

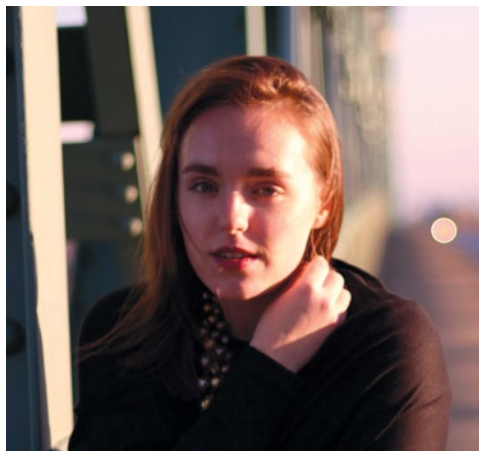
2. Randal and Penny Urwiller

3. East Texas

4. William "Liam" graduated on May 27 as Salutatorian of Hawkins High School. Liam has been awarded multiple state and national recognitions in academics, engineering, and robotics. Liam's most significant achievement to date has been earning the rank of Eagle Scout.



William Ray Urwiller



Autumn Amber Weis

5. Liam loves working with his hands, problem solving and engineering new ideas and concepts. He also enjoys building models and playing the piano. Liam serves as a sound crew leader and on the cleaning crew in his local congregation.

6. Liam will be attending the University of Texas at Tyler in the fall to obtain a B.S. in mechanical engineering. After graduation, he hopes to pursue a career in robotics or commercial drone design.

7. Liam is committed to living his life as a servant leader, leading by example and helping other people through whatever work that he does.

Favorite Quote: "Life is a place of service, and in that service one has to suffer a great deal that is hard to bear, but more often to experience a great deal of joy. But that joy can be real only if people look upon their lives as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness."—Leo Tolstoy.

Favorite Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

Alan Waterhouse

2. Roy and Michelle Waterhouse

3. Columbus, Ohio

4. Alan graduated from Pickerington High School North on May 21 with Decem Decori honors and a 4.5 GPA. During high school, Alan was involved in student council for four years, student body vice president his senior year, president of the National Honor Society, principal cellist of his school orchestra, and a starting member of his school's varsity volleyball team while being named an all-state scholar athlete.

5. Alan has played cello for seven years and has accomplishments including being the principal cellist of the Youth Philharmonic of Central Ohio. He practiced for 2,059 days in a row and was a member of the Columbus Cello School. This summer he is going to compete in a half ironman triathlon. Alan is also involved with his church congregation. He was the president of the teen speech club his senior year, he volunteers on sound crew, participates in activities each year at the Winter Family Weekend, and he attended Camp Buckeye, Camp Cotubic, and Northwest Camp.

6. This fall, Alan will be attending Case Western Reserve University to study mechanical engineering while participating in one of their orchestras.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Do all things without complaining and disputing" (Philippians 2:14).

Autumn Amber Weis

2. Berkeley and Carmella Weis

3. Portland, Oregon

4. Autumn graduated on June 10 from Camas High School in Camas, Washington.

5. Autumn serves her congregation by singing in both its choirs, and she especially enjoys the youth acapella choir.

The highlight of her senior year was volunteering on the United Youth Corps Guatemala project this past winter.

6. She plans to study Spanish in Western Washington University's Honors Program starting this fall.

7. *Favorite Scripture:* "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might: for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Please see page 23

Pastoral Visit to Portuguese-Speaking Brazil and Angola

by Mitchell Moss

Jorge de Campos undertook a three-week trip beginning with the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. He visited the brethren in Maloca de Moscou, Brazil, fulfilled new visit requests elsewhere, and also visited Angola, where a church of approximately 6,000 members who were once part of the Worldwide Church of God exists.

The group in Angola—which is called the Worldwide Church of God in Angola—had previously contacted Mr. de Campos after finding the Church's Portuguese material online. They requested more literature and communication at that time, expressing a desire to be considered "brothers in Christ" with United (search "Angola" on UCG.org and read "Report About Sabbath-Keepers in Angola" from the January issue of *United News* for more background). After communication back and forth, the Council of Elders suggested Mr. de Campos visit them, so that the two organizations could become better acquainted and so each could figure out ways they can work together—to "build bridges," as then-Council chairman Robin Webber put it in a letter sent ahead of time. Mr. de Campos observed Last Day of Unleavened Bread and Sabbath services with them in Luanda, where their largest congregation is located (618 and 728 were in attendance, respectively). From Mr. de Campos' daily travel blog: "The board asked me . . . to convey to all the brethren that they are committed to the same truth, the same doctrines and the same walk . . . They said they have us all in their prayers."



Jorge de Campos with members after church services in Uberlândia, Brazil.

The rest of the trip, including details about new visits, seeing progress in the agricultural project and cattle in Brazil, and more can be read on his travel blog.

Mr. de Campos will be taking another trip with his wife, Kathy, in July. This time they will visit the city of Huambo, the second largest city in Angola as well as home to their second largest congregation. **UN**

Read more about Brazil and Angola here:

www.travelpod.com/travel-blog/jorgedecampos/3/tpod.html

Colombia

Continued from page 8

There were nine people for Passover in Monteria, which was held at a member's home. It was small and meaningful. The next evening was Night to be Much Observed, and it was also kept in a member's home, where some of the women worked all day making the food. There were 20 participating, and for six of them (not including the baby), this was their first Night to Be Much Observed. There were many good discussions with people on this evening.

The next day there were services for the First Day of Unleavened Bread with 20 in attendance. Jaime Castro gave the offertory message, and Gayle Hoefker played offertory music. Scott Hoefker gave the main message titled "*Días de panes sin levadura . . . encontrando nuestro camino fuera*"—"The Days of Unleavened Bread . . . Finding Our Way Out." It was about leaving Egypt and sin. After the sermon, we had a blessing of little children.

During the Days of Unleavened bread they also went to Medellin for two days. Here they were able to see some more brethren and have dinner with them. And then they went to Bucaramanga.

During their time in Bucaramanga they had a Bible study, which was also held at a member's home. Claudio Sierra gave a Bible study about what are we to learn from observing the Days of Unleavened Bread. There were a few questions and some discussion afterward.

The Hoefkers were also able to see the *Beyond Today* studio and view the new remodeling that's been done. Recently, the congregation received some donations to upgrade the studio to provide better recordings without the noise distractions from the outside, such as cars, barking dogs and crowing roosters. The Hoefkers said they were impressed with the upgrades. They will greatly improve the quality of the Spanish voiceovers of the *Beyond Today* program. The Sierra brothers have completed voiceovers in Spanish on 125 programs.

After church on the last Holy Day, everyone in the congregation gathers for a viewing of a *Beyond Today* episode. It is a custom they have where they watch a program every Sabbath afternoon and then have a discussion about it afterwards.

On this last night in Santa Rosa, the members had a special evening planned for the Hoefkers. They invited a local singer, Victor (not a member), who writes poems and puts them to music to sing for them. The songs that he sings are from the southwest area of Colombia. One of the songs is about a prodigal son, and another is about love. The brethren ordered pizza for the event, along with providing candy, popcorn and nuts for snacks. After Victor was done singing, a few members sang karaoke songs.

Even after some travel difficulties and leaving later than expected from Santa Rosa, the Hoekers said this was a very profitable pastoral trip. They were able to visit most of the congregations in Colombia and were able to talk with most of the members. Mrs. Hoefker said: "It is necessary to have this face to face contact with the members as we are able. Please continue to pray for them, as they continue to pray for the members around the world." **UN**



The Hoefkers enjoy a meal with the members in Santa Rosa del Sur.

GCE

Continued from page 1

shared a major theme: God is working in these areas, and the growth is palpable, both spiritually speaking and in numerical terms. The international presenters were Daniel Porteous from New Zealand; Johnnie Lambert, who serves the Baltic and Nordic countries; Chuck Smith, who serves the Caribbean; John Elliott, who serves East Africa; and Mario Seiglie, who oversees the Latin American region.

Other sessions at the conference's first day included a presentation on the features of the new UCG.org website and current development of local congregation pages, a presentation on the potential dangers young people face with technology and a women's round table discussion in the evening on the theme of the conference.

Monday at the conference saw what was widely held to be one of the best sessions at any GCE meeting in recent memory: a series of four half-hour round table discussions for the entire conference in attendance. Eight to 10 ministers and wives sat at two dozen or more tables (with at least one member of the Council or administration at each table) and chose questions from a mug in the center for discussion. The questions originated from actual correspondence received by the personal correspondence team, dealing with difficult, hard-hitting and very real subjects.

Monday saw more presentations by Jorge de Campos on international perspectives on living the Word, Gary Smith on marriage counseling and Donald Ward on living the weightier matters of the law.

Robin Webber concluded the meeting in prayer, and Steve Myers led a closing hymn.

- *Process for the GCE Submitting an Agenda Item—Pass (Yes—239; No—15)*
- *Process for the GCE to Submit an Agenda Without a Meeting—Pass (Yes—223; No—31)*

These two ballot items were simple technical changes to these two processes—each made references to Bylaw 7.9, which was updated last year and its number changed to 7.8. The ballot this year was simply to update the references in each process to be the correct, updated number of the bylaw referenced.

- *Technical Amendment to GCE Rules of Order—Pass (Yes—243; No—11)*

The GCE Rules of Order document referenced bylaw 7.9.2, which was amended last year and its number changed to 7.8.2. This ballot changed the reference to the new number.

- *Process for Calling GCE Special Meetings—Pass (Yes—238; No—18)*

The Bylaws declare that the GCE has the power to call a special meeting, but the process by which that could be done had never been established. This process was drawn up by the Council and was approved by the GCE.

- *Amendment to Constitution 5.1.1 and Bylaws 7.6.1—Fail (Yes—171; No—90)*

Constitution 5.1.1 defines (and bylaw 7.6.1 restates) that to change any part of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church (which are listed in article 2 of the Constitution), a ¾ majority of the number of elders in the United Church of God have to vote yes. However, approximately 20 percent of the elders in UCG do not cast ballots. Effectively, this means nearly 100 percent of those who actually participate by casting ballots would have to vote yes on any updates to the Fundamental Beliefs for them to pass. This amendment sought to change Constitution 5.1.1 and Bylaws 7.6.1 to mean that a ¾ majority of valid ballots actually cast is all that's required to alter the Fundamental Beliefs.

- *Amendment to Bylaws 8.7.2—Pass (Yes—231; No—25)*

This bylaw amendment strengthens and clarifies the authority of the Council over hiring, firing, setting pay, or altering responsibilities for any position in the employment of the Church, if it so chooses.

- *Defining the Marriage Relationship—Pass (Yes—229; No—32)*

This statement is the first of its kind, being an official statement that's not on the same level as a fundamental belief, but which still makes a formal declaration of belief of the Church about marriage, ratified by the highest governing body of the organization, the GCE (this statement is reproduced in full on page 20).

- *Interpretation of Majorities Required to Amend Constitution 5.1.1(1)—⅔ majority pass*

The Constitution specifies how a change to the Constitution can be passed—whether by a simple majority, a ⅔ majority, or a ¾ majority. The Fundamental Beliefs (which are in article 2 of the Constitution) require a ¾ majority to be changed—and it is article 5.1.1 that specifies that. But to change article 5.1.1 itself, which is not a fundamental belief, there was difference of opinion whether a ⅔ majority to change would suffice or a ¾ majority, since it spells out the prescription for changing the Fundamental Beliefs. In differences of opinion of interpretation of the Bylaws, the Council holds authority to interpret. But interpretation of the Constitution requires GCE approval. Therefore, this ballot was a binary choice put to the GCE to interpret which it felt made most sense—⅔, or ¾. The GCE chose ⅔ by a simple majority. UN



Photos by Mitchell Moss and Linda Merrick

Top: elders take part in round table discussions on Monday morning of the GCE.

Right: Victor Kubik and Robin Webber award Robert and Dyanne Dick for 50 years of service in the ministry.

Bottom left: LeeAnn Luker speaks at the women's discussions on Sunday evening.

Bottom right: Robin Webber speaks.







Read the entire report here:
www.ucg.org/members/news/annual-meeting-of-the-general-conference-of-elders-2016

Council Selects New Chairman



Donald Ward in his new role as chairman at the Council meetings.

At the May 19 meeting of the Council of Elders, Rainer Salomaa was honored for his service and awarded with keepsake bookends.

Then chairman, Robin Webber was also honored for his 4 ½ years of service.

Mr. Webber thanked the Council and a vote was taken to elect the new chairman. The Council selected Donald Ward to serve as council chairman for 2016-2018, and Robert Dick as deputy chairman for the same period.

Mitchell Moss

Up and Coming

United Youth Corps Guatemala—Eagle's Nest Orphanage



Caroline Roybal holding a baby from the Eagle's Nest Orphanage. She was a participant in the project last year.

United Youth Corps is seeking 10 individuals from around the world who want to work hard to make a life-long impact on the children at Eagle's Nest Orphanage. The individuals needed are passionate about working with children, connecting with them, showing them love and affection, are willing to work hard and stretch outside of their comfort zone both physically and emotionally.

Once selected, you and your fellow Youth Corps team members will team up with other young adults from Latin America to help plan and teach a day camp with activities that include: the Bible, English, art, music, dance, sports and others. Afternoons will be dedicated to working on a physical work project to help better the orphanage. This fast-paced project requires you to adapt quickly to a changing schedule and maintain a positive attitude when faced with uncomfortable conditions. Classroom experience and proficiency in the Spanish language is extremely helpful.

Responsibilities: Prior to our trip you will develop lesson plans and activities for the children. Once in Guatemala you will teach activities, participate in leadership development, help in the physical work project, and grow really attached to the kids.

Location: Eagle's Nest is located in Sololá, Guatemala, in the mountains. It overlooks the beautiful Lake Atitlan.

Benefits: The project offers opportunities to grow as a leader, meet the brethren from Guatemala, and build strong bonds with your the fellow international Youth Corps team. It will expand your world.

The biggest benefit will be the joy of serving, loving and making a meaningful impact on the children at Eagle's Nest.

Cost: Room, board and ground transportation to and from the orphanage will be provided by Good Works. Participants are expected to provide their airfare costs and some extracurricular costs, totalling no more than $100.

Apply at: http://www.ucgyouthcorps.org/projects/application.php

See more about this project: http://goodworks.ucg.org/blog

For further information please contact Lena VanAusdle: Lena_VanAusdle@ucg.org

Deadline to apply: Friday, Sept. 2, 2016.

Local Church UPDATES

Randy D'Alessandro Honored for His Service in Michigan



The Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan, congregations honored their beloved pastor Randy D'Alessandro and his wife Mary on the Sabbaths of May 14 and May 28 in farewell celebrations.

Both congregations extended to them gifts with love and appreciation for their faithful service to the area. They served in the Detroit area for 19 years and 16 years in Ann Arbor.

With happy tears we wish them much success and happiness as they continue the work of serving God's people and serving our Father in the Chicago area.

Malcolm Murray

Blue-Ribbon Dancer of Wisconsin

Alexander Schweitzer is an eighth grader who attends the Wisconsin Dells congregation of UCG and lives with his grandparents, Jim and Shirley Buckmaster in Waunakee, Wisconsin. About six years ago Alex was watching a televised program with his grandmother Shirley on PBS about children learning ballroom dancing. Alex asked his grandmother, "Can I do that?"

Shirley researched local dance studios and found one whose owner's passion was teaching ballroom dancing to young people.

Alex began taking lessons and has participated several times in the Wisconsin Dancesport Championship held every year at the world-class Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The event was held April 27-May 1, 2016, with the amateur competition being held on Sunday.

Alex has had several dance partners near his age since he began competing. This year, however, Alex competed with his instructor, Tina Freitag, as his ballroom dance partner. Tina is the owner of Fusion Dance Academy in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.

They performed in nine separate categories: standard waltz, tango, foxtrot, Viennese waltz, cha cha, rumba, East Coast swing, samba and salsa, winning nine blue ribbons for first place in every category.



Alexander Schweitzer with his dance partner Tina Freitag, competing at the Wisconsin Dancesport Championship.

Jim Buckmaster

America

Continued from page 1

In our appearance we highlight the prophetic importance of these epochal changes. We cite three historic United States Supreme Court decisions (School Prayer in 1962, Roe v. Wade in 1973, and Same-Sex Marriage in 2015) as the moral toboggan-slide away from the knowledge of God. We show the relevance of the message of Habakkuk to our modern conditions and God's pending judgment for sin.

In the second presentation we clearly explain to our audience the answer to one of life's critical questions: "Who and what is man?" We explain to them why they were born.

The third presentation is a strong call to repentance, an answer to the obvious question: "What must we do now?"

In the one-hour-and-15-minute multimedia presentation, we take the essence of God's message to our audience in a personal manner that allows people to become better acquainted with the United Church of God and the local pastor and members of the congregation. This personal engagement moves the audience another step along the path of discipleship (Matthew 28:19). God does the calling, and He adds to the Church as He sees fit. We sow the seed. God provides the increase.



Photo by Mitchell Moss



Photo by Linda Merrick

Top: Gary Petty speaks in Nashville, Tennessee, at the America: The Time is Now! *presentation.*
Right: Steve Myers speaks in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Do We Really Expect America, or Any Nation, to Repent?

The answer is no, not the entire nation or all the people. But some who hear the message and respond will turn and embrace the words of life. It remains our duty to take a strong message to the world. In Ezekiel 33 God places the prophet as a watchman over the land of Israel. The watchman was told:

"When he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:3-6).

Ezekiel was set as a watchman to Israel who was to warn the wicked to turn from unrighteousness and live. Throughout this passage God stresses the duty of the watchman to warn the unrighteous to repent. God lays personal accountability on both. The prophet stands in the long line of God's servants, past and present, who deliver a message from God to not only Israel of the past but the world of today. And here in North America, it's a message to the modern-day descendants of Jacob (Israel).

Not all who heard a message from God in the past responded. Not all who hear it today will respond. We also understand the need for God's calling. But just as Ezekiel was told to go and preach, *so must we.* We have no choice but to obey God's instructions to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The apostle Paul said he held "great sorrow and continual grief" in his heart. "For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:2-3). We are like Paul in our desire for any to awake, repent and obey God. We should pray in this spirit.

What Do We Mean *"The Time Is Now"*?

We have been asked, does the phrase *"America: The Time Is Now!"* mean this is the only day of salvation? *Absolutely not.* We understand this is not the time God is working to save all mankind. God's Holy Days reveal how God is working within a specific timetable to reconcile humanity to Himself and to offer salvation to all. The prophetic message of the Eighth Day tells us of the time when God will give opportunity for salvation to those not called in our age. The time of God's calling for the majority of mankind is yet in the future.

But today is *a* "time," and the Church must work to make known the message of salvation to those whom God chooses to call now—in this age. Hebrews 4:7 says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." The message the Church preaches is falling on good ground and making disciples. We are doing what Jesus commanded His followers to do (Matthew 28:19-20).

The phrase *"America: The Time Is Now!"* comes right out of the teaching of the biblical prophets and Jesus Christ Himself. Mark 1:15 records Jesus Christ's message: "At last the time has come! The Kingdom of God is near! Turn from your sins and believe this Good News!" (New Living Translation).

John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ, bore a similar urgent message: "Flee from the wrath to come . . . bear fruits worthy of repentance . . . even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:7-10).

As it was the mission of Ezekiel to warn people and urge them to repent and turn to God, so it was the message of Isaiah: "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

A Coming Time of Trial

Bible prophecy shows a coming time of trial on the world unlike any ever seen previously (Daniel 12:1). There is a coming time called "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) that will strip the physical blessings the English-speaking nations have enjoyed for more than 250 years. What Scripture calls the "great tribulation" will be an unprecedented period of trouble that will cause many—who heard God's truth taught by His servants in this age—to finally repent and acknowledge God. The seeds of this repentance are being sown today by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

America, Canada and the other major English-speaking nations enjoy the Abrahamic promises of national greatness and material wealth. As a result, of all today's nations, there is a greater judgment on them. We are seeing these nations abandon God and the knowledge of God. We are watching them turn away from the last vestiges of biblical morality and ethic in its culture. God will bring judgment on them and the world, a judgment that will bring this age of man to a close.

Every indicator in today's world heralds a growing lawlessness that edges closer to the conditions Christ spoke of in His Olivet prophecy. How can we as a Church stand by and *not preach a strong message of warning and repentance* to show where sin is taking our nations? How can we stand by and *not provide a strong compelling message of hope* that people can take hold of today? How can we stand by and *not show our peoples that there is a God* who is guiding this chaotic world and that *they can know that God* and enter a spiritual relationship with Him and His Son Jesus Christ today?

What We Learn From Jeremiah's Example?

We can't stand by and not preach the message of salvation, joy and hope. Yes, we have to be like Jeremiah who, when he grew weary of his role as a prophet and sought to retire, did not. He grew discouraged when no one listened to his message, but kept his hand to the plow anyway. It was Jeremiah, who was held in derision by

Please see next page.

America

Continued from previous page

his own people, who did not stop preaching God's message to a sin-sick people.

We must be like this Jeremiah who, when he nearly stopped preaching to Judah, turned around and ran back toward the fire by saying, "His word was in my heart like a burning fire and shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not" (Jeremiah 20:7-9).

"God will hold us accountable if we do not give a strong message of warning, repentance and hope."

What is impressive about Jeremiah is he stayed in Jerusalem through the siege by Nebuchadnezzar. *He did not leave.* Even after the city fell, when he could have gone to Babylon with other captives, he chose to stay behind (40:4-6). Jeremiah even purchased a piece of property after the fall of the city to show his faith in God's promise to restore the hope of Israel (32:8-25).

Jeremiah's patriotism was of a higher and purer form than what we might understand today. His ultimate patriotism was to the Kingdom of God. Judah had lost sight of its unique role to be the emissary of the Kingdom on the earth. She had broken the covenant. So, God had abandoned the nation after repeated attempts through many prophets to persuade her to return to Him. All Jeremiah could do was sound God's message while working in the streets and among his people to alleviate suffering and do what he could do to help his neighbors through the worst period of its national existence. Jeremiah sounded a warning, yes, but he also *stayed at his post* to lend a helping hand of comfort and a word of encouragement.

Do We Have the Heart of Jeremiah?

Jeremiah's example is where we are today. We must show compassion for a nation and people whose sins we must identify with all clarity. The "balm in Gilead" for which Jeremiah looked could only come from God.

The Church's message must go to the heart of the matter. Israel and Judah were punished because they broke faith with terms of their relationship with God. They trampled the commandments and laws of God. Our focus must have this as a foundation as we explain the other prophecies of Daniel and Revelation dealing with specific end-time events.

Our peoples, the descendants of those whom Jeremiah served, have done the same. And today they desperately need a vision of hope that gives meaning to their existence in today's world.

The United Church of God cannot stop going forward with a message of hope and understanding for America and a world "slouching toward Gomorrah." God will hold us accountable if we do not give a strong message of warning, repentance and hope.

A Generational Issue, or Something Else?

Let me conclude with an anecdotal story I think illustrates where we are today in the Church and a reason for questions like these we have addressed. Last year as we were planning for the first America: The Time Is Now! appearance in Texas, a young staff member came to my office with a letter written by Garner Ted Armstrong in that summer of 1970. Mr. Armstrong had written to the ministry then to explain why he was doing the America Listen! campaigns. The staff member asked me: "These events are talking about the same issues the Church was addressing 45 years ago, yet in most respects the world is in better shape than it was then. Are we sure our message is relevant?"I explained much of what I have written here. Since that day I have thought a lot about his question and our work. America in 1970 was coming out of the period of the 1960s, a time of social turmoil. Vietnam had sucked the morale of the nation. Many at that time wondered what lay ahead for the nation. For the Church to address the nation with that message was timely and appropriate. Fruit was born from those campaigns, and today we have members in United who were there for their first contact with God's Church! We pray that our modern version of these campaigns will bear similar fruit down the road.



Photo by Peter Eddington

Right: Some of the Beyond Today crew *in Texas.*

America and the world have gone on. And today the world stands at an *even more critical juncture in history.* How much longer before we see key prophecies fulfilled? We do not know. But we do know what Jesus Christ tells His Church to *do.* We continue to preach the gospel and *do the work!*

Many, like this staff member, were not born in 1970. Many members and a fair number of our elders were not of age to fully comprehend the nature of the work in the 1960s and earlier. Without this understanding of our historic traditions, coupled with a balanced and thorough biblical understanding, we can miss a critical understanding of who we are and what we are to be doing.

The year 2016 is more than a generation removed from 1970. The world has dramatically changed. The Church has been through a great deal of stress. But God's Word still tells us to "be found so doing" when He comes.

The work of United is a continuation of God's long use of His servants who have stood in the gap and preached truth to a world held spiritually captive by Satan. Our mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples of all nations and care for those disciples. The *Beyond Today* public appearances work with the other tools of video, print and Internet to accomplish this mission.

We thank our ministry who are wholeheartedly supporting the home office to reach the public in their area. And we thank our congregations, which have always been wholehearted, enthusiastic, supportive and hopeful of positive outcomes in the work that God gives us to do.

That is why we are going city to city now—because *the time is now!* UN

It's in the Details

Continued from page 3

instructions and details to be followed during construction and in the manufacture of the instruments and furnishings to be placed into service. To their credit, Moses and Israel followed the details to the letter, and God was well pleased (Exodus 40:16, 34).

Similarly, God has given us a vision of His Plan and what He is doing and building today. We see the "big picture" of Jesus Christ returning to earth, establishing His Kingdom, and reigning for a thousand years, with His firstfruits—you and me—reigning under Him. We ask God to continually hone that vision in our minds. It's a vision we embrace; and it should motivate and inspire us. As Solomon said, "Without vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, King James Version).

Along with the vision, God also gives the details of the spiritual temple He is building in us, individually and collectively. He expects His "details" to be incorporated into our lives and character. They are details from God, and they are details that are important to our salvation.

Christ said this concerning the importance of detail and the "big picture:" "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

God admonishes His people, from ancient times until today, to know and live the details of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3). If we are to live by every word, we need to learn every word, "rightly dividing" and studying His Word daily. Furthermore, God says to live and worship Him exactly the way He says, not "adding to it or taking away from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32 and Revelation 22:18-19).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gives this goal for His disciples: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Perfection requires keeping the vision in mind and an ongoing "accounting" of our lives and behavior. With the power and guidance of His Spirit, we strive to add the "assets" of godly character and the fruits of His Spirit, while continually making the choice to deny self and overcome the "liabilities" of our lives, such as sin, carnal nature, faults, weaknesses, poor attitudes and inattention to the needs of others.

Today God is in the process of building a perfect spiritual temple in us, individually and collectively as His Church. He expects His Church to reflect His vision and the details of His word: "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27, emphasis added).

Are we committed to letting God build into our lives and character the vision, along with the details of His Word? If we are, He will be faithful to complete the building process He has begun, and He will be glorified by the finished product.

When Moses and Israel completed the tabernacle in the wilderness, God was pleased: "Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did . . . And the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:16, 34).

May God be glorified as we strive to live by every detail of the Word of God and become "faithful in what is least and faithful also in much." UN

Special Music at the Feast of Tabernacles



by Steve Myers

One of the highlights of the Feast of Tabernacles is being inspired and uplifted by the special music presented during services. If you're a musician, we need you to volunteer to help serve during the Feast. If you can serve musically in any way, please plan to volunteer to help serve.

The easiest way to volunteer is when you registered for the Feast online. If you did not sign up to serve in music go back to feast.ucg.org and click on the "register for the feast" tab and update your registration to include volunteering for music.

If you can't go online and would like to volunteer to serve musically, contact the appropriate special music coordinator listed below.

We encourage you not to wait any longer to volunteer! Go online or contact your music coordinator as soon as possible, as it greatly helps in the preparation and planning process. UN

Canada

Feast Site	Name	Contact Info
Canmore, Alberta	Rainer Salomaa	(403) 873-8185 ray_salomaa@hotmail.com
Midland, Ontario	Paul Wasilkoff	(513) 207-4518 paul_wasilkoff@ucg.org
Saint-Adele, Quebec	Kevin Ford	fordian65@yahoo.com
Victoria, British Columbia	Roger Korthuis	(360) 757-7195 rjk.korthuis@clearwire.net

U.S. Music Coordinators/Directors 2016

Feast Site	Name	Contact Info
Bend-Redmond, Oregon	John Seifert	(740) 569-4160 seifertjc@msn.com
Bigfork, Montana	Wil Berg	(307) 455-2432 wberg@dteworld.com
Branson, Missouri	Randy Schmidt	(414) 659-8347 rschmidt46@wi.rr.com
Cincinnati, Ohio	Katherine Rowland	(513) 432-9265 kat@rowlandweb.com
Galveston, Texas	Arvid Simmons	(615) 512-7673 arvid.simmons@healthspring.com
Gatlinburg, Tennessee	Ken Shoemaker	(937) 779-7690 kenshoemaker1@gmail.com
Kohala Coast, Hawaii	Kayleen Scheiber David Hoover	(541) 609-1875 kayleen.e.schreiber@gmail.com hooverland@gmail.com
Jekyll Island, Georgia	Neil LaCasse	(517) 663-1764 neilbabeeleanor@gmail.com
Ocean City, Maryland	Hugh Buchanan	(240) 625-8244 hugh.buchanan@myactv.net
Oceanside, California	Dan Salcedo	(714) 637-4335 dan_salcedo@ucg.org
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin	Jacob Sutherland	(781) 492-6249 jacobsutherland@hotmail.com
Panama City Beach, Florida	Joe DeCapite	(478) 397-2471 decapitejo@aol.com
Phoenix, Arizona	Ralph Redline	(405) 888-0501 ralph_redline@ucg.org
Steamboat Springs, Colorado	Bill Turnblad	(651) 491-0247 bturnblad@cpinternet.com

Doctrinal Statement Defining the Biblical Marriage Relationship

This is an official statement of the United Church of God on the biblical definition of marriage according to the Bible.

God is in the process of establishing His spiritual family (Ephesians 3:14-15; Hebrews 2:10), which the human family portrays.

At creation, God designed and established marriage between the first man and woman as a divine institution (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9). He created man and woman in His own image (Genesis 1:27) but with distinct differences between male and female. In creating Adam, God said it was not good for him to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Man needed suitable and complementary companionship. So God specifically made woman and established marriage as a covenant relationship not only between a man and a woman, but also with God (Genesis 2:21-25; Matthew 19:4-6, Malachi 2:14).

Marriage between a husband and wife is the basic building block of the family and human society, and is the only biblically approved sexual relationship (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible teaches that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe God intends that marriage only be between one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (1 Corinthians 7:2-3). God also stated that husband and wife are made "one" to produce "godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15).

God's intent for the marriage union moves beyond just the physical plane of a social and economic compact with human bonding and procreation. The marriage relationship between a husband and wife with their inherent personal and gender uniqueness was established to teach husbands and wives to love, honor and respect one another with the same kind of giving and self-sacrificial love demonstrated in the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Marriage thus has a great divine purpose that transcends this physical existence.

Marriage is a godly relationship and divine institution, and God joins together a husband and wife in marriage (Matthew 19:6, Mark 10:9). Any definition of marriage other than as an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman is illegitimate and invalid in the sight of God and His Church and contradicts His divine instruction as revealed in the Bible (Acts 5:29).

Marriage is a very serious commitment, safeguarded in the law of God. Any form of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual acts, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, sexual lust or use of pornography, is sinful and offensive to Him (Exodus 20:14, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:5, Matthew 5:48, Galatians 5:19-21). Similarly, a transgender marriage or sexual relationship, and/or changing the God-ordained roles of men and women, is sinful and unbiblical. However, God offers reconciliation to all whom He calls and who repent of these and all other sins and seek His forgiveness and turn to Him in faith and obedience (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Peter 3:9-13, 1 John 1:8-9). While God clearly and unequivocally condemns all sin with the suffering and harm that it brings, every person should be afforded compassion, love and kindness (Titus 3:3-7).

The governing documents of the United Church of God, *an* International Association, specify that the collective ministry of the Church is vested with the authority to define its beliefs and practices based on the Bible, the supreme source of revelation for mankind (2 Timothy 3:16-17). UN

Edited and approved by the Council of Elders, and ratified by the General Conference of Elders on May 15, 2016.

Striving to Do What Is Right

Continued from page 3

adjusted adults who are considerate and loving to others. Likewise God wants a living sacrifice in the way we live, which is nothing else than our reasonable duty and calling. It means we are to live a new life, with a transformed way of thinking according to God's will (Romans 12:1-2). And that is to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly in faith before God (Micah 6:8)—which is exactly what the Pharisees lacked (Matthew 23:23).

It means putting to death our own corrupt human nature with the help of God's Holy Spirit and putting on the new man according to Christ's image (Colossians 3:1-14). In doing that the genuineness of our faithful commitment will be tried and tested through various difficulties in life, which we have to endure until the end (1 Peter 1:6-7; Revelation 17:14). It means we have to put on the divine nature of God, to be like Him, with the help of God's Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:3-4).

More specifically, to do what is right, we must make every effort to add to faith all virtuous characteristics of proper interpersonal relationships, with self-control and patience in the process of becoming more like Christ is, in both brotherly love and godly agape love (2 Peter 1:5-7). This is an unending commitment to bear fruit in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:8). If we do so we will never leave the Church (2 Peter 1:10), and we will be blessed with the gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of God (2 Peter 1:11).

"As true children of God we are therefore to imitate Christ in doing what is right, which involves holding on steadfastly to the truth and to grow in His grace and knowledge."

For this reason it is important for us to be reminded of what is important (2 Peter 1:12-13)—what is the "trunk of the tree." Hopefully we have learned to choose the right tree, the tree of life (Genesis 2:16-17)! Therefore choosing to do what is right is really the meat of the matter (Deuteronomy 30:19). That is the solid food of the Christian life and experience: discerning right from wrong and having our senses exercised in doing what is right (Hebrews 5:14).

As true children of God we are therefore to imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; John 13:15) in doing what is right, which involves holding on steadfastly to the truth and to grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

A trap some may fall into is when they try to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:2-3). In such cases some get caught in twigs, with their own ideas, fables and calculations of dates and times which only cause divisions. Such do not produce godly edification of the Church of God (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:3-5). Some of these people may come in by stealth, as has happened before, turning the grace of our God into an excuse to break God's laws, and some others have ended up denying our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (Jude 1:3-4).

We clearly live in the end times, and some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits, doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1) and contradictions of what is falsely called science (1 Timothy 6:20). We know that such ungodly ideas spread like cancer, causing disputes that generate pain and suffering (2 Timothy 2:16-17, 23).

Let us keep the big picture in our mind—the trunk of the tree! We were born predestined to be sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:16). Don't get sidetracked onto twigs, because they break sooner or later, and one then ends up being separated from the trunk of the tree (John 15:6).

Remember that our hope is so great that even the whole creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed, when the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21, New International Version).

Let us keep our great hope—the purpose of why we were born—burning bright in our minds with the help of God's Holy Spirit. This way we may do what is right and pleasing to God. And this way we might be preserved blameless at the time of Jesus Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 5:23). UN

Hard Discussions With Your Children

Continued from page 4

ter. It's much more than a bodily function, and God designed it to be so.

The same goes for our sons. We should train them to love and respect our girls. They need to know that they have power to exhibit self-control, but it's the easy way to give in and have sex before marriage. We need to train them to be man enough to wait.

I've been doing my own research as well. My children are still young, but I want to be prepared for the teen years. I want to know how to raise my children to make good decisions, especially the decision to save themselves for their future spouses.

I have talked to a few families who have raised children into their 20s who have made good decisions, including the decision of abstinence. The common thread I've heard from successful parents has been open communication—straightforward, no beating around the bush, open conversations. This is hard for some people, but these discussions have to happen. We have to communicate exactly what our expectations are for our children. We can never assume our kids will "just know" not to engage in sexual activity. Tell them that oral sex is unacceptable too. God wants them to be pure. Their future husband or wife wants them to be pure.

Our children also need to know that we are there for them and that we're in their corner. The ability to turn down a sexual encounter takes a whole lot more inner strength than giving in. They need to know they have us as allies in the fight.

Meeker points out this fact: "Let me put it this way. If you don't want your daughter to be sexually active in high school, you need to tell her, you need to teach her. Otherwise, she will be. Popular culture trains our daughters for a life of promiscuity" (ibid., p. 122). This is so true. Our kids will engage in these conversations whether it's at school or even with church friends. Conversations like this need to begin with us, because we can provide a godly perspective. We can provide truth! I don't want my children to hear about sex from a peer. I want to have a healthy, godly discussion with them so they can hear the truth and the right expectations from my wife and me, not from someone who has as many questions as they do answers.

We need to give our children the power to say no. They should understand that they will have desires and they are not alone in that. The key is to control those desires. Everyone has to ask themselves, "Do I want to follow God or give into the temptation that can so easily ensnare me?"

The other side of the coin is we need to not make sex seem evil, which could affect their relationship with their spouse after marriage. I have close friends who have had trouble in their sex lives after being married because sex was presented as being so evil that it was hard to make the shift in understanding that this is what God intended for them to share with their spouse. Sex is not evil. Society's twisted understanding of sex is evil. Sex the way God designed it is a wonderful blessing. This message has to be part of our training. Our teens need to understand that sex is right, good and pure for couples who have been united by God in the marriage covenant.

I have seen the slipping of society's morality since I was a teenager. I'm in the process of preparing for my kids' teenage years. What I see in successful parenting is that constant, straightforward communication is necessary. Our children need our involvement in every aspect of their lives. They need to hear what we have to say about certain topics, and they need to hear our expectations. We have to give them the right tools to make good choices. Sometimes what they need is simply our involvement and making sure they know that what they do with their lives is important to us.

If mistakes have been made and, if our children have already engaged in sexual relationships, we can show love and continue to encourage them to repent and strive for purity from here on out. They aren't tainted forever because of their mistakes. God can and will forgive any sin when repented of. Showing love and support will only give our children the confidence to make better decisions the next time.

What should we do?

- Be the first to bring up the subject of sex. Tell them how it works. Tell them that God intends for sex to be good in the proper context, and tell them what the Bible teaches about acceptable sex.
- Give them your expectations. You should say, "I want you to wait to have sex until your wedding night." Don't beat around the bush. Set the bar for them. Tell them you are there for them to help them succeed.
- Revisit the topic. Ask what their friends are saying about sex. Ask if they have any questions. Ask if they doubt anything you have told them about it. Listen.

Our job as parents is a big one. We need to train our children to make good and right decisions. We have to train them to analyze situations and prepare for situations they may find themselves in. Once they discern a situation they need to have the power to make the right choice. We must teach this skill. If we do, they will have the ability to wait for their future spouse. They will have the power to go against what society tells them about sex. If we can't pass on this skill, there is a culture out there that is counter to God's way of life and will train our children for us. But that training is not what leads to life. That training leads to a life of confusion and pain and eventually death. Let's talk about what makes us uncomfortable. Our children need us to. They want us to. They need to have the strength now so they will be able to then teach it to their children. UN

Inside United Podcast: Episode 056

Inside United podcasts are posted every Thursday online. The podcasts cover various happenings in the United Church of God. In episode 056 Darris McNeely interviews Victor Kubik about his plans for his upcoming trip to Europe and Ukraine. Below is the transcript.



Photo by Linda Merrick

Darris McNeely and Victor Kubik in the studio.

Darris Welcome to *Inside United*. I'm Darris McNeely, associate Media Producer here at the United Church of God, and with me today on the other side of the microphone is Victor Kubik, president of the United Church of God. And you are about to take off on a trip to Europe. Maybe you could tell us a stop-by-stop as to where you're going to be going and the purpose of the trip.

Victor Well, my wife Bev and I are going to Italy first, where we will visit the Italian work in Bergamo, which is a suburb of Milan. And the director is Carmelo Anastasi, and he has an interesting operation there that we really want to see. He has some very innovative methods of contacting people through an email ministry, so we really want to see how that's all working.

Darris This'll be your first trip there as president, won't it?

Victor Yes, so we're looking forward to stopping there to see how they're doing as far as editorial, as far as the Church and financial, just see what their needs are, and to be able to catch up on that.

Darris And you'll be there on the Sabbath with the members of the Church there from northern Italy.

Victor Right. We're in Bergamo, we're meeting there with the congregation [there], and having a chance to really fellowship with them and be with them. We're really looking forward to it.

Darris And then what will be your next stop on this trip?

Victor Well, actually on that trip, we're going to actually take a couple days with Carmelo. We're going to Venice.

Darris Oh, are you?

Victor Which is a only two-hour drive. We were surprised as to how close it was. He kind of gave me a few choices of a couple things we could do, and we chose Venice. I've been there a couple of times, but I really wanted to show it to my wife. It's just a most unusual and interesting city.

Darris Well, good. And then you're on to Russia.

Victor Right. Then we're actually on to Ukraine.

Darris Ukraine.

Victor And there is a flight directly from Milan on Ukraine Airlines—that's the only kind of one that we're holding our breath on—but it's a 737, you know, it looks good and everything, so we're flying from Milan to Kiev, and from there we will go on up to Chernihev, which is 30 miles due east of Chernobyl.

Darris And you have been involved in Chernobyl for about 20 years with the—since the accident that took place there with the nuclear reactor that has a very interesting connection to what you're doing with LifeNets, as well.

Victor Yes, actually that has led to the formation of LifeNets. I started working there in April of 1996. That was a month after I moved to Indianapolis from California, and through a series of events and doctors in the United Kingdom who were part of the Church, we were able to establish contact with some most interesting people in Chernobyl—notable one being Dr. Vasyl Pasichnyk, who was the first pediatrician to treat children victims from the nuclear accident on April 26, 1986, because he was the head pediatrician in the largest city next to Chernobyl. And on April 26, the next day, he was noticing helicopters and all kinds of activity around the nuclear power plant. He knew something was really bad, and nobody notified him about anything. And so he took a Geiger counter and headed towards the direction of the plant, and the Geiger counter went off the scale. And he went to the city officials and to the government officials and said, "What's going on?" He said, "Do you realize that we have population and children?" and so forth. And they just told him that his Geiger counter needed recalibration.

Darris What is the condition of Chernobyl—the facility's meeting still probably ongoing needs there from that disaster? But what exactly is the state of things now?

Victor Well, one thing is that, it's not only the physical state, but it's a political state that's troublesome. Chernobyl itself is nestled between Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. I mean, it's just a few miles from the Russian border. And part of the problem is that politically, when the accident happened, it was still the USSR. And then when the countries all became independent in 1991, Russia said, hey, it's your problem. They just completely wiped their hands of it. And it was a terrible accident that not only affected people in that area at that time, but also made the land dirty—it still is, you know, for some of the elements. The first isotope is iodide, which is only 5 days, but then strontium and cesium that are 26 years half-life. And that's over with now. But the land will still be contaminated for a long time. And it's really a study in what happens when nuclear things go wrong, and this was an accident. And it's just unthinkable what would happen if there was a actual nuclear war exchange.

Darris And this same doctor still, operating the clinic there that—

Victor Yes. Actually, he lost his role as the head pediatrician, because of his making so much noise about wanting to do something for the kids. And so he just became a regular doctor at the hospital. But then in 1996, he and other doctors wanted to set up a special clinic, which they called "Revival". And we were part of the start of that clinic. LifeNets has donated over a half a million dollars in the last twenty year period, and so he's built a beautiful, beautiful place that's not only medically sound, but just for children it's just absolutely wonderful.

Darris Well, they'll be glad to see you.

Victor Well, we'll be glad to see them. I haven't been back there in seven years.

Darris From Ukraine, where do you go next?

Victor Then from Kiev we fly directly to the Netherlands, to Holland, and we'll visit with our churches there—actually meeting in the middle of the country in Utrecht, and then the far western church in Germany, Dormagen—[we hope] some of the people from there will come over, and we plan to have a big day with a church service, a dinner, and just fellowship there.

Darris And again, this'll be your first time as president to visit with the members in the Netherlands.

Victor Yes, it's a very interesting church. It's a church of I understand about 60 people or so, and there are many, many young people with children, so we're looking forward to a dynamic church. And we plan also to visit one of the members that has been very, very sick with cancer, Jamie de Moei. She lives[in eastern Netherlands], so we plan to see her. I'll be there Saturday night when we're there, or Sunday.

Darris Yes, and we know Jamie and her son Derrik was here at the Ambassador Bible College a few years ago, so certainly they're in our prayers. And she is—for her recovery and certainly her—just comfort and dealing with this long ordeal that she has had. So you will, as you know, the members in the Netherlands are vibrant, active, dynamic group of people. A number of young people, but it is an interesting group. They kind of meet in different locations to accommodate the needs of the brethren throughout the Netherlands. Always a good opportunity to go over there. So you will—I've made a couple of trips myself, as you have. You'll be welcomed and they'll be glad to see you.

Victor Well, we're sure looking forward to it and we always enjoy it when we travel. The most important part of travel for us is the contact with people and bringing the United Church of God all together with our mission and so forth, and I'll be talking about our mission, what we're doing with public appearance campaigns and many other things.

Darris Well, we will look forward to doing another podcast when you get back, to get an update on what took place and what you saw and what you did, and probably at that time, even preview the next trip that you have coming up, which will be to Australia.

Victor Yeah, that will be a week later!

Darris All right, well, Vic, it's been good having you. We wish you safe travels and safe journeys.

Victor Thank you very much, Darris.

Darris And for all of you, thanks for joining us here on *Inside United*. Come back soon for more. UN

Listen to the Podcasts here:

www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united



Luke Williams

Luke Williams

2. Blane and Julie Williams

3. Cincinnati East

4. Luke graduated from Oak Hills High School, and he is currently working at Jeff's Marathon as a cashier/stock clerk. He has worked at Skyline and had a paper route.

5. His interests include: sports (especially football, basketball and golf); he likes music/music technology, deejaying, investing/finances and cars. He was a member of the Business Club at school and also deejayed for homecoming dances and proms. Luke has attended Camp Cotubic and Camp Woodmen. Besides camp his favorite church activities are the Feast of Tabernacles and Winter Family Weekend. He has participated in teen activities/volunteering at Ronald McDonald House and senior breakfasts in the local congregation. He also helps with sound for Sabbath services.

6. Luke plans to attend the University of Cincinnati and study business/finance.

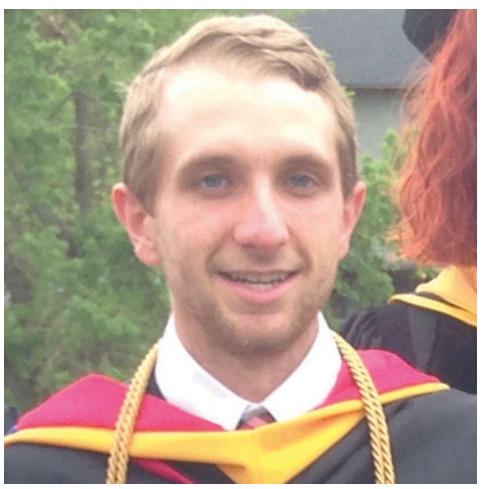
7. *Favorite Quote:* "Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."—Muhammad Ali

Favorite Scripture: Psalm 23:4.

University, Graduate and Post Graduate



Berenice Emehiser



Caleb Greene



Jason Lovrien



Jason Witmer



Mariah LeighAnn Fooshe

Berenice Emehiser

2. Spokane, Washington

3. Berenice graduated with a master's degree in education, with an emphasis in adult education, from Eastern Washington University.

5. She enjoys participating in the music program at church, going camping, hiking, and biking and spending time with her family. Now that her degree is done, She hopes to do more of that. She is looking forward to serving at Hye Sierra this summer.

6. She wants a position as a lecturer at Eastern Washington University. She had a quarterly faculty position in the EWU physics department for 12 years. The masters will enable her to qualify for a lecturer position. She will also continue to teach online physics classes for Spokane Falls Community College.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Every formula which expresses a law of nature is a hymn of praise to God."

Mariah LeighAnn Fooshe

2. Michael and Shari Fooshe

3. Nashville, Tennessee

4. Mariah attended Nashville State Community College and received an A.A. of culinary arts and certified chef, Summa Cum Laude.

Internships: Lugo's Fine Dining, Montgomery Bell State Park, and Camp Jamaica.

Work: Montgomery Bell State Park.

5. Mariah attended United Youth Camps since age 6, she was the chef at Camp Jamaica, sings in the church choir, and participates in YMADE (Youths Making a Difference Everywhere).

Her hobbies are culinary arts, fruit carvings, commissioned paintings, playing piano, beadwork, crocheting, sewing, dancing, skating, exploring, singing, and spontaneous karaoke while cleaning.

6. Mariah will continue to work as a banquet coordinator and server at Montgomery Bell State Park. She will also be opening her own fruit carving business and personal chef services. She is earning notoriety in the Nashville community as a fruit carving artist and garde manger specialist. Mariah caters weddings and other formal society functions.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Don't call it a dream, call it a plan!"

Favorite Scripture: Philippians 4:8-9.

Advice: "Never give up and always do your very best. When you think you can't take on anything else, take on just one more thing. Chances are, you will look back on your accomplishments with pride and happiness and it will better you altogether." "Always think of others before yourself. Your life will be lived to the fullest."

Caleb Greene

4. Kingsport, Tennessee

5. He graduated from King University in Bristol, Tennessee. While at King, he was awarded the General Biology Award, Organic Chemistry Award, and RTL Liston Award for being the top academic student. Caleb also was the ACS Outstanding Chemistry Student for his class and graduated as a King Honors Fellow.

He enjoys leading songs in Kingsport and volunteering at Camp Woodmen, Camp Cotubic, and Hye Sierra. With his free time, he enjoys tennis, running, hiking, and traveling with his siblings—Nathaniel, Morgan and Natalie.

6. He plans to attend ambassador Bible College this year then medical school at Wake Forest School of Medicine.

7."Some people dream of success while others wake up and work hard at it."—Winston Churchill

Jason Lovrien

2. George and Laura Lovrien

3. Medford, Oregon

4. Jason graduated from Baker Early College with an associates degree from Rogue Community College. He is a member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and made the President's List most terms.

5. Jason has attended Northwest Camp and Camp Hye Sierra for several years, and he had the opportunity to attend Winter Camp last year. He serves at the Northwest Preteen Camp and is a member of the local speaking club.

Jason enjoys martial arts, playing guitar and programming. He has competed in ballroom dancing and can juggle seven objects at a time.

7. *Favorite Quote:* "Learn from Rehoboam and don't take advice from someone young and inexperienced like me (1 Kings 12)."

Jason Witmer

3. York, Pennsylvania

4. Graduated with honors with an associates degree in electronic engineering technology at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology.

5. He also operates the sound system at his local congregation and sometimes leads songs.

6. After graduation, he plans on looking for work!

7. After a lot of hard work, he has reached his milestones. Jason says, "If someone doubts that they can turn their situation around, there is a scripture for them to think about: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

What's New In MEDIA?

BEYOND TODAY

Television Airing Schedule

Title	Host	Literature	Airing Period
Are You Led by God's Spirit?	Steve Myers	*The Power of the Holy Spirit*	July 3-9
Preparing for Christ's Return	Gary Petty	*Christ's Reign on Earth: What It Will Be Like*	July 10-16
Kingdoms at War: Powers of the Unseen World	Darris McNeely	*You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*	July 17-23
The Mark of the Beast	Steve Myers	*The Book of Revelation Unveiled*	July 24-30
Kingdoms at War: Babylon Stands Against God	Darris McNeely	*The Final Superpower*	July 31-Aug. 6

Information Technology Position Posted

Human Resources and Information Technology have announced an opening for a Help Desk/Junior Programmer Analyst.

The Help Desk/Junior Programmer Analyst is present at the home office each workday. He or she is responsible for providing technical assistance and support related to computer systems, hardware, and/or software. He or she works with personnel in multiple departments at the home office, ministers in the field, as well as with external vendors when needed. The incumbent also provides support for international offices when needed. Other additional duties will be assigned as needed.

Skills include excellent customer service, troubleshooting and communication skills. A good understanding of Microsoft Office, e-mail, Microsoft Windows, antivirus software and PC hardware are a must. Consistent customer care and quality standards are core competencies of the position. Experience in programming and Web development, especially in Microsoft Access or .NET and Drupal/PHP are a plus.

A college degree or equivalent and one-year related experience are required.

Potential employees must be baptized members of the United Church of God. The deadline for submission of an application is Aug. 12, 2016. The Church does not keep submissions or applications that do not result in the applicant being hired. For more information about the position and to submit a resume, please contact human_resources@ucg.org.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 17-20: Camp Ironwood, Minnesota
July 24-31: Northwest Camp, Portland, Oregon
July 31-Aug. 3: Camp Buckeye, Orrville, Ohio
Aug. 7-16: Challenger West Program, Dubois, Wyoming
Aug. 8-11: Camp Seven Mountains, Colorado
Aug. 10-Aug. 14: Challenger East, Ohio
Aug. 14: *America: The Time is Now!,* Cleveland, Ohio
Aug. 15-22: Youth Camp in Kenya, Meru, Kenya
Aug. 21: *America: The Time is Now!*, Dayton, Ohio
Aug. 22-25: Council of Elders Meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio
Sept. 2-5: Leadership Workshop, Cincinnati, Ohio
Sept. 2-5: Single Adults Weekend, Rapid City, South Dakota
Sept. 20: *America: The Time is Now!*, Raleigh, North Carolina
Sept. 22: *America: The Time is Now!*, Greensboro, North Carolina
Sept. 25: *America: The Time is Now!*, Charlotte, North Carolina



LISTEN TO THE **INSIDE UNITED** PODCAST
www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united

Correction

United News aplogizes for the mistake on page 20 of the May—June issue. The dates for the teen camps were incorrect. For Camp Cotubic, Camp Woodmen, Camp Hye Sierra, the dates were June 26-30. For Camp Pinecrest the dates were June 24-28.