Reflecting on the Feast of Tabernacles

Think about a theme that you picked up on throughout the messages you heard during the Feast of Tabernacles. Look back at your sermon notes or think back to your experiences to soak in the lessons you have learned. Now apply them to your life between now and next Feast.

God guides us throughout the Feast to help us learn new lessons to help us strive to live His way. He does have an amazing plan for each of us. And part of that ultimate plan is to be in God's Kingdom. Are you doing all you can to prepare for this amazing gift from God? The Feast is just a small taste of that Kingdom.

In this issue of United News there are articles summarizing the wonderful foretaste of that Kingdom we all experienced at our UCG festival sites. The reports are arranged by region, beginning on page 3. And there is a full-color photo centerfold beginning on page 13. If you would like to see these photos that were published—as well as many more that we did not have room for—please see the United Church of God Flickr page at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157674983693368.

Adding to this sense of unity, UCG ran the same hashtag campaign as last year across social media sites, encouraging Feastgoers to post photos using #ucgfot. You can still search #ucgfot on your favorite social media website to see the vast array of photos (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

Once again, the millennial spirit was felt amongst the brethren at the Feast as they fostered new and old relationships as one Body in Christ and rejoiced in the foretaste of the return of our Elder Brother Jesus Christ and His rule on this earth.

May God's Kingdom come quickly. UN

New Beyond Today TV Studio Set Installed

by Peter Eddington

On Oct. 8 and 9, the new on-camera Beyond Today television set was installed in the Church's video recording studio.

The new set, which includes over 50 linear feet of background material, is now in place. It includes three primary areas for recording various types of material. In the center is the main stand-up area for recording long-format programs. To camera right is a large video wall that will have an interview section in front of it. And on camera-left is an area that can be used for dailies and shorter recordings.

The lighting plot is now being finalized and studio lighting fixtures are being purchased. These will include the latest in DMX-512 digitally controlled LED fixtures to supplement our older, existing studio lights. These require an updated lighting control board and digital control cabling.

Existing equipment has now been moved from our old television studio, and from video recording “Studio B” and from our old radio studio. We are now up and running in our new radio studio and “Studio B,” which is housed in the upstairs portion of the video recording studio, next to the control room.

We will soon be obtaining chairs for our studio audience seating. And we are scheduled to record our first Beyond Today programs in the new facility during the afternoon of Wednesday, Nov. 28.

There is a lot of work yet to be done in preparation for our first recording session; we would certainly appreciate your prayers that all the work that needs to be completed by that date goes smoothly, so that we can proceed as scheduled and do our part to preach the good news of God’s Kingdom around the globe. UN

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BY THE NUMBERS

13,778 kept the Feast of Tabernacles with UCG.

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Bend-Redmond, Oregon
Panajachel, Guatemala
Nigeria

Workers installing the new Beyond Today set in the new studio.
ABC Student Council

Feast in Angola

More than 2,500 brethren were able to gather in the province of Kuanza Sul in Angola for God’s Feast of Tabernacles. They are part of the Igreja de Deus Mundial church in Angola and are associated with the United Church of God, an International Association. They rejoiced greatly and gave God thanks for the wonderful opportunity that God has given them to be part of this great work.

More than 40 brethren were assisted by the UCG congregations in Bakersfield and Las Vegas to attend the Feast for the first time. These brethren had to walk 100 miles to the nearest town where they then caught a bus for an additional 1,000 miles to get to the Feast. Also a number of food items and other supplies were purchased to assist the brethren with enjoying the Feast in Angola.

The brethren in Angola thank all UCG brethren for their kind help and assistance to make God’s Feast in Angola a time of rejoicing.

- Jorge de Campos

Inside United Podcast

Victor Kubik and Steven Britt in the recording studio during one of the recent podcasts they made. The topic was based around science and the Bible. To listen to all Inside United podcasts please go to: https://www.ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united.

by Linda Merrick

Inside United aired its first episode on Dec. 3, 2013, and now five years have gone by with 92 episodes completed by the time of publication. The main host behind the topics and production is president of the United Church of God, Victor Kubik.

In 2013 the vision of the Inside United podcast was to share the happenings at the home office as well as updates on world events, such as disasters. Since then it has evolved into an informational resource, where people can get to know what is going on with various Church areas as well as members around the world. The podcast’s primary intended audience is members of United Church of God. However, there are plans to expand beyond church members.

Mr. Kubik wants to have a few regulars who come on and talk with him, as well as one-time guests. One of his current regulars is Steven Britt, assistant pastor in Maryland. The main topic Mr. Britt and Mr. Kubik discussed is sound science of the Bible. That is, how the Bible and science tie in together. It all started with an article that Steven wrote for Beyond Today magazine titled “Sound Science and the Bible” (search for it at ucg.org). The first podcast between the two was a follow-up to the article. “The point of these discussions is to focus on modern science and how we maintain a biblical view, rather than secular view of the world that has no hope,” said Britt.

He has described working on the podcast as relaxing and a break from the regular schedule. Since it is similar to just a conversation, it flows naturally and effortlessly. Both he and Mr. Kubik have a good rapport, and can easily have discussions together.

The idea behind the podcasts was to have an easy-to-produce format, that is easy to listen to, quick to edit and in a media outlet that will last. Chaz Leathers, assistant video editor, is the primary editor and producer of Inside United. Mr. Leathers is there for all recordings that happen in the home office. He explained that he really enjoys working on this project, and through it he is able to be more creative, having more freedom in his editing. They are also quick to create. He adds he really likes to hear the individual stories of the people who are guests, and that this is a great first step for Beyond Today listeners to get to know the Church.

“It has become a really good and intimate way to keep brethren up to date on the happenings of the church and share in-depth biblical discussions,” said Rudy Rangel, production supervisor, who is one of the forerunners who first worked on the podcasts. It is the story behind the stories.

If you would like to be kept up to date of what is happening in the home office and around the world with various church congregations, then please go to ucg.org/members/united-news/inside-united. You can also find episodes of Inside United on Soundcloud. Go to soundcloud.com and type “Inside United Podcast” or “United Church of God” into the search bar.

You can also find the podcast on iTunes. Just go to Podcasts and type in “Inside United” or “United Church of God.”
Festival of Tabernacles 2018

FESTIVAL REPORTS

**Africa**

**Benin**
This year, 26 people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Adjabo, a city located in East Benin. The weather was beautiful and sunny. Everything was on-site, with vast green spaces that allowed us to fraternize in the open air.

Sermons were in French and the local language, and through the sermons we were reminded to devote our lives to the coming Kingdom of God.

Our talent show allowed us to discover the great musical abilities of our youth, as well as their parents. Our pastor Moise Mbout spent the last four days with us. We are grateful to God and all those who support us to make this Feast possible.

*Moise Mbout and Pierre Ogoudele*

**Cameroon**
Douala the port city in the littoral region and Yagoua in the far north region on the border with the Republic of Chad were our two Feast sites in Cameroon. Both were kept in our church complexes.

We had 53 in attendance for both sites. Despite pre-electoral tension, the situation was calm, but with climate change there was a lot of rain at both sites. However, in Yagoua rain was a great blessing for farmers and herders. Many thanks for all who helped us.

*Moise Mbout and Pierre Ndjak*

**DR Congo**
This year we had two Feast sites in the Congo: Kinshasa (Banza) and Lubumbashi, in the province of great Katanga. The greatest attendance was 85 people for both sites.

Despite pre-electoral tensions, things were calm. In Lubumbashi, it was our first Feast of Tabernacles. We thank God for all his protection and blessings that he has given us during the Feast. *Moise Mbout and Sébastien Kalombo and Philippe Nzinga*

**Ghana**
Brethren from Ghana’s congregations of Accra, Winneba, Agona and Kwan-yako met in Cape Coast for the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Attendance was around 215. Services were held at Ghana National Association of Teachers. Most of the brethren stayed on-site. A tent was set up for cooking meals. American visitors, Paul Moody, senior pastor for West Africa, and Darrell and Janet Keisel were welcomed with the warmest Ghanaian hospitality.

All services were translated between English and Fante. Sermons focused on preparing for the Millenium, and what it will be like—including the challenges. The Eighth Day sermon left us with a vision of going forward to New Jerusalem. As Mr. Meselebe put it in his sermon about preparing to be in the Kingdom and our need to be more like God and Christ: “Who wouldn’t want to be there?” Mr. Moody offered an interactive Bible study about marriage and dating, giving the brethren opportunity to discuss godly principles.

Cape Coast is a lovely location near the ocean. One of the popular activities was having fun on the beach. Other activities included a tour of the slave castle, a ties included a tour of the slave castle, a

**United States**

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- Satellite, Tampa, Florida ............... 38
- Satellite, Tucson, Arizona ............. 40
- Satellite, St. Petersburg, Florida ..... 26

**TOTAL**

13,778

See more 2018 photos here:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/united-church-of-god/albums/72157674983693368
Ivory Coast

The Man region in Blolo was where our Feast site was located this year with its good climate. Man is a mountainous region with several food crops. There were 32 participants who attended the Feast this year. We thank everyone who helped us with this Feast and we thank God for His protection.

Moise Maboat and Mamadou Tokpa

Ogemo, Kenya

Ogemo Feast site is situated in an agr- cultural setting in the rural parts of Gusu Land 22 km from Kiasi Town. The Feast site is on a church-owned property and therefore most of the attendees were accommodated in tents and a few in self-contained four small panda houses constructed on the church land. This is the eighth time the Feast has been held at Ogemo.

The attendees had a wonderful time together and enjoyed each other as they fellowshiped together for the eight days (Hebrews 10:25). For the first time it did not rain, as is the nature of Gusu Land and therefore all had time to sit around the fire later as they fellowshiped. Since the tents used were purchased over 10 years ago, they are not in good shape, so we were thankful that God intervened and it didn’t rain as usual.

Services were conducted in English and Kiswahili, so that all could follow the messages, which were spiritually inspiring. The senior pastor Monte Knudson came to the feast and gave a sermon and a Bible study. The family day was held on Friday where the children were given special treatment. And there was a special dinner for everyone.

Most food that was prepared was contributed by those who attended using their second tithe and then prepared by professional cooks in the church-owned kitchen (Deuteronomy 14:22-26). We had very few cases of health challenges like colds and fever, in children, which were handled by the qualified first aid personnel.

The other challenge was that we ran out of water. The main source of water supply is from rainwater harvest and stored in tanks. However, this time the little we had stored was used to complete the building of the panda houses. Therefore, we had to go out to buy water from vendors for the kitchen, bathroom and washroom.

In conclusion, all went very well. Most of the attendees have confirmed safe travels back home.

Glory be to God for the success.

Moses Nyaira

Diani, Kenya

For the second time running, the Feast site was at the Word of Life in Diani, south coast of Mombasa. The highest attendance during the eight days was 85 people including international brethren from countries including Canada, the U.S.A., Zambia and Rwanda. It was an enjoyable time as attested to by many, especially the children who could be heard at the last day of the Feast inquiring about next year’s Feast of Tabernacles.

We were privileged to have Senior Pastor Monte Knudson, his wife and two youngest sons with us. Mr. Knudson had to travel to the other two Feast sites in Ogemo and Got Kachola during the course of the Feast and was able to return to the end of the Feast in Diani. We were refreshed by sermons about the soon-coming Kingdom of God and how much we need to remain focused on the ultimate goal. We also had two Bible study sessions, one of which gave the brethren an opportunity to ask questions that were answered from a biblical perspective. We were also treated to a host of pleasant special music from the brethren, including the internationals. A special moment this year was the baptism of 12 members, 10 at Got Kachola and two at Diani, which was done by the senior pastor.

The various social activities the local and international brethren enjoyed included family day games, a barbecue and a game of darts. The women made headlines as they won two times against their male counterparts in tug-of-war. There were also many opportunities to mingle casually throughout the Feast, including going for a swim in the ocean, swimming pool games, evening indoor games and chats. The young married couples also took time to have a discussion amongst themselves concerning the joys of modern-day marriages.

The brethren are already looking forward to the next Feast, which we pray will be even more enjoyable and will present more opportunities to fellowship and serve.

Josphat Gakuo and Antonio Ndungu

Got Kachola, Kenya

Got Kachola is a fishing village located on the western edge of Kenya on the shores of Lake Victoria. The Feast was held using our church facility and grounds perched high on a hillside, providing a panoramic view of Lake Victoria and several distant islands.

There were 231 Duolua-speaking brethren who enjoyed eight days of rejoicing and relishing in the spiritual and physical food that was provided. A hired team of cooks looked after all the delicious meals, which were enjoyed together. The daily experience of fun activities, Bible studies and a family day.

Guest speakers included senior pastor Monte Knudson, pastor Harrison Kioko and pastor Kriphas Ongori. Monte Knudson and the local pastor Joel Owuoti baptized 10 people at a beautiful beach on Lake Victoria.

The challenges we had included hot, sunny weather, while some of our members were drenched by heavy rain in the old tents they were staying in. The brethren were very thankful for the support we received from our international brethren.

All rejoiced at the Feast, and we were sad to depart from one another at the end of the Eighth Day.

Joel Owuoti

Nkhwazi, Malawi

Here in central Malawi we kept the Feast of Tabernacles 2018 at a new site in Nkhwozi, Malawi. We kicked off the celebration with a welcome dinner and had 53 members from Malawi, Zambia and the U.S.A. attend.

The Feast this year was kept camping style with members staying in either tents or summer huts made out of bamboo and reed mats. It was amazing experiencing the level of unity that comes with camp- ing with your brothers and sisters during God’s Feast. Many cups of tea and meals were shared with one another.

Throughout the Feast, we had numer- ous Bible studies and Q&A’s that were enjoyed by all. Along with group Bible studies, we played many games of foot- ball, netball and volleyball. One of the main pastimes was singing. People were singing for enjoyment and also practicing for special music all day.

We had a wonderful time living on the piece of land that God has blessed us with. We were able to keep the Feast in unity while staying outside of the world. Our new pump worked through the eight days, so we had fresh water every day. This was a truly wonderful Feast where the unity was so present it was nearly tangible.

Michala Hilgen

Erinmo, Nigeria

I took a chance and decided to keep the Feast in an unfamiliar place, traveling alone, to the massive continent of Africa. I began the journey anxious, frazzled, not quite knowing what to expect. This trip was out of my comfort zone.

Yet, this Feast was outstanding! What I found when I arrived was that the same familiar spirit that binds God’s family together in unity.

The Feast site was held at the Upper Springs Resort in Erinmo near the city of Ilesha in the southwestern state of Osun- deko in Nigeria. The group of approxi- mately 110 brethren from all over the country stayed together at the resort.

Each day we attended services the Nigerian brethren wore bright, beauti- ful colors of the native Nigerian attire. They wore the traditional formal clothing of each person’s native tribe. Needless
to say, this contributed to the beauty and diversity of Christ's body. The messages during the Feast were all in English as Nigerians speak the Queen's English. The messages were inspiring and instructive. Each speaker added layers to the theme of this year's Feast: "God's Vision for You." One day after services Oludare Akinbo, Paul Ogundipe, Nnamdi Aninye and myself took a machete, a backpack of supplies and attempted to climb a large hill near the resort. We took turns using a machete to cut our own path up the steep hill. It was a grueling process cutting our own path and it was extremely time-consuming. Midway up the hill we were surprised to hear the sound of children's voices high up the hill. Paul called out to them and they responded by saying, "Over here!" We followed the children's voices until we reached a wide well-beaten path going straight up to the top. We practically skipped up to the summit. The view on the summit was stunning. One could see for miles and could see the whole city of Ilhosa laid out like a map. The next day we took 40-plus Feastgoers up the hill to see the view. Of course, we started with the path we cut down the previous day! Since all the brethren stayed together in the resort and shared meals twice a day, there were many moments to get to know each other. Fellowship would often go late into the night. Hearing about other's challenges and struggles that we face in our daily lives was galvanizing. It was encouraging to hear about each other's lives. Some stories made one want to cry, others made one want to jump for joy! At times one was left marvelling at God's hand in each of our lives.

Those moments of fellowship are what is treasured most from the Feast and I never felt like an outsider amongst the brethren. They treated me like a brother. There was a special sense of family this Feast and I am looking forward to being reunited with the Nigerian brethren at a future Feast. If you would like to feel this sense of brotherhood, please consider going to Nigeria next year.

Joseph Muralla

Margate, South Africa

The Feast in South Africa was held in the seaside town of Margate, on the Kwa-zulu Natal South Coast, and was attended by 144 people from six congregations scattered across the country.

The messages focused on encouragement to endure to the end, staying committed, and the attributes we need to be developing now to be part of the incredible year's Feast: "God's Vision for You." Each of our lives was galvanizing. It was encouraging working together and sharing; a family day, providing an opportunity to share a meal together; and a family dinner-dance.

The Eighth Day also provided a great opportunity to spend the day together, with two services and an abundant pot-luck meal in between.

During the service on the fifth day we were reminded of the unpredictability of this life and our need to look to God always to provide—part of the roof of our meeting hall started to show signs of caving in, and while we were able to complete the service, we then had to immediately vacate for the remainder of our time there.

Despite the challenge of finding a new meeting place for the next day, and ultimately using two different venues for the remainder of the Feast and Eighth Day (one of which was generously provided by a Living Church of God congregation not too far away), the spirit of unity and enthusiasm was by no means dampened. The desire and determination by all to continue having an inspiring Feast was truly encouraging, and many stepped in and went the extra mile to maintain the momentum and enjoyment of the Feast, and the effort truly paid off.

There was also some discussion around the significance of this happening, as only weeks earlier it had been announced we would be moving to another Feast site, specifically with the goal of providing a venue that would enable us to all be located closer together, allowing more opportunity for fellowship.

Overall, a wonderful Feast, with enthusiastic attendees determined not to let circumstance dictate their Feast experience. We look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles 2019, and God willing, we'll see you in Mossel Bay.

Vivien Botha

Kpalimé, Togo

As a saying goes, "Days pass by, yet each one is different," and such are our Feasts of Tabernacles, which happen each year in the same place, yet are never the same. This year we were once again in Kpalimé, a touristic site located 120 kilometers from Lomé, the capital of Togo. There were 36 of us total.

The weather was rainy for the duration of the Feast, as beneficial rains watered us. The only savior of all of mankind. It was exciting afternoon. Women had time also for their talents in preaching, song leading, and special music, etc.

We heard messages of exhortation and hope concerning our walk with our God. Each of us was involved in one way or another to bring about the success of the celebration. We benefited from this period of abundance of prisoners in the town with a 50kg bag of rice, a container of oil and a container of soap. The director of the prison was delighted and he admitted to us that these were the kind of gestures that he had been hoping for for a long time because the residents haven't had enough to eat.

We also visited a castle situated in the side of a mountain called Vial castle, named after its first owner, a French colonist who lived in the region in the 1930s. Not far from there was a meteorological park. We listened to the explanations of the observer with great enthusiasm.

Once again, our God has blessed us. It was with sadness that we said our goodbyes, yet we hope to see each other again next year.

Kossi Fiaboe

Lusaka, Zambia

The 2018 Feast of Tabernacles was held at the Verino Feast site, about 30 kilometers east of Lusaka city. There were 231 people who attended the festival, from Lusaka, Swembeshi, Situmbeko, Kasumpa, Nalubanda North, Mapoko, Itumbo and Chipata countryside. A few came from Choma and Mumbwa.

On the opening night, people had the privilege to watch a short welcome video from Victor Kubik, which was wonderful and exciting. The following morning the brethren listened to inspiring and encouraging spiritual food. The messages talked about the Kingdom of God. It is hoped that the messages preached throughout the Festival touched the hearts of many brethren, and that they opened their hearts for repentance to lead a godly way of life.

Notable activities were the baptism of 16 repented people who accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. Nine women and seven men were baptized at a place called Pazzuri about 5 kilometers from the Feast site. We also had the blessing of little children—about 19 were brought by their parents and we prayed for their blessings. This event ended with special music from the Chapita women, followed by a sermon.

We had an elder's lunch and walking safari, where elders got to see animals and birds of different kinds. It was an exciting afternoon. Women had time also for discussions and a gift exchange. Family day was an event, which was attended by all, with many participating in sports. The youth were also given time to showcase their talents in preaching, song leading, offering special music, etc.

Run the pump in the borehole to supply water. The Feast went on up to the Eighth Day without any serious incident. Lastly, we thank the home office, the California brethren and others for their financial support, which brought joy and happiness for all the brethren. It is our prayer that God grants them abundant blessings.

Major Nawa Talama

Lake Chivero, Zimbabwe

Up to 41 brethren made their pilgrimage to the beautiful Lake Chivero Recreational Park, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) south of the capital city of Harare for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Members enjoyed the fresh air and peace and quiet offered by this nature reserve, with its lovely scenic views featuring the lake, rolling green hills and a variety of wildlife: rhino, giraffe, a variety of antelope, monkeys and many bird species including the majestic fish eagle and ostrich.

Members were housed in the park's thatched roof cottages, and cooking was done for the whole group by the ladies. Activities included nature walks and angling (fishing), from which the brethren were able to enjoy a meal of fish and sadza (corn meal).

Sermons were given by elders Mabasa Chichaya and Mike Mukarati, as well as deacons Mike Nyamasoka and Vensen Moyo. Topics covered included the awesome value of God's Kingdom and His righteousness, the need to be serious about our calling as God is, being equipped as spiritual soldiers to fight to the end, and a calling to emulate the courage and toughness of underground gold miners in pursuit of the treasures of the Kingdom of God.

On the Eighth Day of the Feast, the message was about the hope of the resurrection to physical life for the billions of people who would have died without the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ as the only savior of all of mankind. It was noted that this would occur after the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ and the Saints. It was noted that God remembers every single human being who have ever lived, and that the number of all these people is far less than the number of stars in the universe.

We rejoiced at the addition of three new members to the household of God with the baptism of Margaret Tekeshe, Tombana Mbengo and Darius Pombi in the lake during the Feast.

On the whole, this was a wonderful Feast characterized by inspiring messages focusing on seeing God's Kingdom and His righteousness. There was a positive spirit of joy and brotherly love.

Mike Mukarati
Australia

Merimbula, Australia

For many years the Feast has been held in the quaint and cozy town of Merimbula. Situated halfway between the major cities of Melbourne and Sydney, it is a relaxed place for God’s people to assemble as commanded. Almost 250 people gathered to rejoice and rehearse the meaning of tabernacling. Most were from the states of New South Wales and Victoria, while some came from other parts of Australia. There were also guests from New Zealand, America, Papua New Guinea and England.

Some of the highlights included more than 40 children singing in the children’s choir, plus nine first-time Feast keepers. Both thoroughly enjoyed themselves along with the rest of God’s people. The focus of the Feast messages set our minds on the realities of the Millennium Kingdom and how we are to prepare for it. A variety of special music added to the Feast atmosphere each day. The range of activities made it possible for good fellowship for all ages. Throughout the Feast we kept contact with 24 fellow-brethren in Tasmania, who were part of a satellite site. It was evident there was a spirit of appreciation in sharing the Feast, as we all looked ahead to the promise of the future God has planned to restore the world.

In summary, it was a very encouraging Feast and we anticipate returning to Merimbula in 2019, God willing.  

Matthew Steff

Penang, Malaysia

The Island of Penang situated in the Malaccan Straits between Malaysia and Indonesia, with its balmy tropical climate, made for a perfect Feast site for the South-Eastern Asian brethren and visitors. In its sixth year, Penang hosted 118 Feastgoers from four continents.

The Bayview Beach Resort provided accommodation as well as the venue for services in their air-conditioned ballroom. Breakfasts, included in the package, were located alongside the inviting swimming pools and provided Feastgoers plenty of morning fellowship to begin their day.

Messages painted a picture of Christ’s Millennial rule, with a recurring theme of “the pearl of great price” emphasizing the intrinsic value of our calling and hope that we all share. We were truly blessed to enjoy outstanding special music every day, which enhanced our worship and focus on God. A youth-focused service gave some of the young adults and youth an opportunity to participate by leading songs, giving announcements, opening and closing prayers and the sermonette.

The youth choir performed special music sharing their talent and voices. Bible lessons plus youth and young adult Bible studies were held on the weekly Sabbath, capped off by a delicious lunch and fellowship, allowing our younger members to build and cement friendships. We were also very excited to perform a baptism of one of our members from Singapore.

A welcome dinner concluded the first Holy Day. The dinner was held as the sun set over the ocean under the swaying palm trees in the hotel gardens with soothing background music. The members enjoyed an exquisite four-course dinner around colorfully set tables.

Other activities included a game evening, youth and young adult activities, a family boating excursion and a farewell lunch.

Charles Desgrosseilliers

Rockingham, Australia

A golden sun sinking into the Indian Ocean marked the beginning of God’s Feast of Tabernacles at the coastal town of Rockingham, Western Australia.

There were 79 brethren gathered together from around Australia and from the U.S.A. to keep God’s Feast together in a spirit of thankfulness, harmony and joy. It was exciting to once again be able to come out of the world and focus on God’s Kingdom soon to come to all mankind.

We were blessed with inspiring and fulfilling spiritual food through this Feast. The opening night focused our minds on God’s promise to bring holiness to this earth, and our need to grow in the capacity to discern today between the holy and the profane, so we will be equipped to discern that wonderful truth with others in the age to come. Messages on following days were a journey through scriptures illustrating the very practical way God will replace practices and beliefs that produce fear in people’s lives today, with real peace, hope and truth. “Rivers of living water” emerged as a theme through many messages.

Rockingham is a site well-known for hospitality and fellowship, and this year was no exception. Many commented on the warmth of the brethren and the “family feel” at the Feast. God also blessed us with warm sunny days, which enabled us to enjoy activities such as a “tree-top adventure” afternoon, a scenic canal cruise, and a wildlife park tour where we were able to be up close and personal with many uniquely West Australian animals and birds. Some members also opened up their home for a wonderful dinner and evening for all who were able to attend. Many other opportunities for fellowship and growing together were also enjoyed.

This Feast was a time we were able to come together as part of God’s spiritual family and rejoice as we continue to seek first God’s Kingdom and His righteousness! We’re very thankful for God’s spiritual and physical blessings on the Feast, thankful to be able to come together and share in these things, and thankful to once again have our focus lifted—from the temporary nature of this challenging physical life, to God’s wonderful plan and future for all mankind!

Paul Vaughan

Hong Kong, China

This year 27 brethren from Hong Kong, Australia, Thailand, China and the U.S.A. gathered in Hong Kong to observe the full feasts of the great God.

God inspired the messages and blessed everyone present with a safe, peaceful and pleasant Feast, with great warmth and affection with all present. Brethren enjoyed activities, ranging from visiting the ecological wetlands park, to riding the world longest cable car, visiting the historic fishing village of Tai O, participating in various educational cultural opportunities, and taking many other wonderful opportunities to experience the wonderful and varied dining Hong Kong has to offer.

It was truly a wonderful Feast, blessed by God, and enjoyed by all.

Bill Bradford

Sunshine Coast, Australia

The opening day began with 262 in attendance. We enjoyed the overseas visitors from the U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand, Mexico and other states in Australia. The pristine beach location and the pleasant weather was popular with those seeking a pure beach experience.

We also had visitors from other Church of God groups in significant numbers during the Feast. We, of course, welcomed them and hopefully served their festival spiritual needs with the messages presented.

Sermons were given by three speakers, as most of our traditional local speakers took the opportunity to travel to overseas sites this year. Many of our sermonette men were also first-timers, who will now become regulars. Our messages were some of the best we have had, all showing a depth of understanding about the Kingdom of the next age that has been “prepared for us since the foundation of the world.” One memorable message was on “Agriculture in the Millennium” contrasting it with agricultural methods used today resulting in the inability to produce sufficient food and nutritional food for today’s growing population.

A standout is our opportunity to fellowship before and after services with the refreshing tea and coffee served by volunteers from one of our local churches. The time spent in the courtyard of the facility was enjoyed by all.

All other activities included a seniors luncheon, family day, Feast social, youth education classes and teen and young adult activities. Some surprises were that some who had not previously done special music before stepped up and excelled.

We couldn’t have asked for better volunteers at our site to carry out all the duties required to run an inspiring Feast.

Terry Franke

Agra, India

The historical city of Agra was our 2018 festival location in incredible India. Six international visitors joined 20 Indian brethren at the Four Points by Sheraton within view of the famed Taj Mahal. Together, we rejoiced and worshiped, visited and fellowshipped, shared all meals and enjoyed the many activities for eight days.

From the opening pre-recorded Feast video on the opening night to the closing messages on the Last Great Day, our focus was on the Kingdom of God and our part in bringing it to the rest of the world—including those living in our host country with a current population of approximately 1.3 billion people.

The highlight activities of this year’s Feast in Agra were the variety show with 100 percent of the local brethren participating, family day that featured a performance by the children’s choir at services, visiting the homes of two church families and a few special dining occasions.

Our Agra feast experience made each of us more grateful for the knowledge of God’s wonderful plan, the stronger understanding of what the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day means for all of humanity, and the wisdom of God in working out His purpose in His way and in His time.

Charles Desgrosseilliers

Penang, Malaysia

The Bayview Beach Resort provided accommodation as well as the venue for services in their air-conditioned ballroom. Breakfasts, included in the package, were located alongside the inviting swimming pools and provided Feastgoers plenty of morning fellowship to begin their day.

Messages painted a picture of Christ’s Millennial rule, with a recurring theme of “the pearl of great price” emphasizing the intrinsic value of our calling and hope that we all share. We were truly blessed to enjoy outstanding special music every day, which enhanced our worship and focus on God. A youth-focused service gave some of the young adults and youth an opportunity to participate by leading songs, giving announcements, opening and closing prayers and the sermonette.

The youth choir performed special music sharing their talent and voices. Bible lessons plus youth and young adult Bible studies were held on the weekly Sabbath, capped off by a delicious lunch and fellowship, allowing our younger members to build and cement friendships. We were also very excited to perform a baptism of one of our members from Singapore.

A Welcome dinner concluded the first Holy Day. The dinner was held as the sun set over the ocean under the swaying palm trees in the hotel gardens with soothing background music. The members enjoyed an exquisite four-course dinner around colorfully set tables.

Other activities included a game evening, youth and young adult activities, a family boating excursion and a farewell lunch.

Penang, Malaysia
The sense of unity created by everyone staying in the same resort really added to the whole festival experience. The Southeast Asian members appreciated the visitors from Australia, Africa, Thailand, and the U.S.A. as a reminder that they are part of a much bigger spiritual family, and eagerly anticipate sharing this piece of paradise with many more at the Feast in 2019.

Grant and Kim Chick

Sakhangyi, Myanmar

About 35 people met in the village of Sakhangyi, Myanmar, for the Feast of Tabernacles. This is the second year they met for the Feast. Last year Aaron and Michelle Dean were able to be there with the brethren but this year no elders were available. Deacon Davidson Le bey—who’s family immigrated as Karen refugees to Sheffield, United Kingdom, and who translated for Mr. Dean last year—was given transcripts of the sermons created for the US shut-ins and was able to translate them and help give spiritual food to this isolated group.

This ingenious group built their own meeting hall and ran power off of car batteries for music and sound. The site is an 8 to 9-hour ride to the other side of the delta, then an hour-long boat ride up the river. Thank you to a few people who learned of the need and donated a little over $1,000 in private donations. Without these donations, the Feast wouldn’t have happened.

Aaron Dean

Orewa, New Zealand

The New Zealand Feast was held in the little beachside village of Orewa, just north of Auckland on the north island of New Zealand.

This year was the highest attendance we’ve had in United for a Feast in New Zealand with 185 in attendance. Everyone immediately had the opportunity to get better acquainted with the “meet and greet nibbles” after services on the first day, followed by a group dinner, dance and first-ever Variety show as the sun set on the second day. A highlight from the variety show was a showcase of dances from various Pacific islands.

The sun shone brightly for the family fun day afternoon at Wenderholm Regional Park, with the memorable wet-sponge races, bubbles, kiddie parachute, volleyball and an impromptu game of touch football. Truly, the Aussies and Kiwis showed their competitive natures in a brotherly fashion. Some keen young adults woke up early enough to watch the sun rise over the Orewa Beach on the east coast, and later the same day drove an hour to watch the sun set over Murawai on the west coast.

This year was an excellent “package of messages” showcasing God’s wonderful plan for the coming Kingdom of God, with more focus on how we can better prepare to contribute towards this great prophesied time, becoming like little children. One message explained how the Old Covenant leads us to God and the New Covenant leads us to salvation, and we took a closer look at Jesus Christ’s last Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day in A.D. 30.

The New Zealand Feast site for 2019 will be in the Tauhara Centre in Acacia Bay, Taupo region.

Linda Porteous

Visayas, Philippines

Brethren in the Visayas region of the Philippines were joined by brethren from the islands of Luzon and Mindanao, and also the U.S.A. and Australia to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day for the fifth year at Baybayon Ni Agalon in Albuey, Leyte. The resort provided a beautiful natural seaside environment for the Feastgoers, giving everyone a beautiful picture of God’s coming Kingdom.

Inspiring messages, beautiful special music and wonderful hymns were among the regular spiritual attractions joyfully shared by all 125 brethren.

Adding to the thrill and enjoyment were the scheduled activities including the fellowship night on the first day followed by the youth, singles and children’s day where the young ones enjoyed outdoor games. A Bible forum for the youth and singles was also conducted by senior pastor David Dobson.

The servants and local leaders also had the chance to bond with each other and share their experiences in leading and serving God’s people during the servant leaders’ dinner on the third day.

The Feast would not be complete without the showcase of talent during entertainment and dance night on the fourth day. The evening of the fifth day was left open for brethren to unwind, bond and enjoy the beautiful scenes around the resort while physically and spiritually preparing for the Sabbath.

The seniors in God’s Church were then honored with a special dinner while being serenaded by the young people on the evening of the sixth day. They enjoyed singing their favorite classic songs.

The seventh day of the Feast was set aside for the family and sports day activities. Fun games including oversized volleyball, a sack race, a bamboo race and many other activities. This gave everyone the opportunity to work as a team and to see how strong God’s family can be when everyone works together for a common goal. The Eighth Day came quickly. Many brethren spent the day taking photos with family, friends and new acquaintances before saying farewell following the closing service.

With the guidance, inspiration and protection of the great God Almighty, and the active participation of volunteers and committees, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day celebration this year was truly a great success!

Jose T. Campos

Baguio City, Philippines

Baguio City was once again one of the three Feast of Tabernacles sites here in the Philippines for the United Church of God. It was held at the “Ang Ating Tahanan” grounds of the Girl Scout of the Philippines, located at the South Drive in Baguio City. Since 2012 we have been privileged to use their multi-purpose hall.

The Feast started out with the opening night welcoming service that was highlighted by the video message from Victor Kubik, welcoming brethren all around the world to this year’s Feast of Tabernacles. The highest attendance we had during this Feast was 146 on the seventh day of the Feast. We also have had a number of brethren from the U.S.A. and Australia who kept and enjoyed the Feast with us this year.

The messages were all uplifting, inspiring, encouraging and helpful to all of us in having a sharper focus on the reality of the establishment of God’s Kingdom, with everlasting peace, true happiness and spiritually abundant living.

We were privileged to have our regional pastor for the Philippines with us for the second half of the Feast, David and Denise Dobson. They spent and shared their first half of the Feast with our brethren in Leyte at the Baybayon ni Agalon in Albuey.

Various activities were all likewise prepared and enjoyed both by the young and the once-young alike as well as the whole family, where everyone had the opportunity to enjoy fun, food, fellowship and games. Among the activities everyone looked forward to and enjoyed were the youth day activities for the pre-teens and teens, the seniors’ dinner hosted by our teens and young adults, and the family day activities. The Festival Show this year was held on the evening of the sixth day. The Festival Show featured all Filipino local festive songs and dances. Featured among others were Filipino songs both in the local as well as in the English language. Locally popular music and novelty song numbers from the 70s, as well as classical folk songs and dances, which always included the famous local folk dance called the “Tinikling” made the evening memorable.

With the inspiring messages, the warm fellowship, everyone present had once again felt they were very blessed by our great God, coming away with a deeper love and togetherness. We all look forward to God’s coming Kingdom with the celebration of this year’s Feast. This year’s Feast of Tabernacles will hopefully be remembered as one of the most joyful and spiritually fruitful Feasts ever.

Rey Evasco

Davao, Mindanao, Philippines

Eight successive days of fellowshipping, feasting and rejoicing! That’s how we can best describe the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day at GSP Camp Alano, Toril, Davao City, Philippines.

Sunday, Sept. 23, 212 men and women, young and old began converging at the GSP site, including two visitors from Australia, two from Luzon and two from the Visayas. The weather was beautiful with warm, sunny days from the first day to the eighth.

Since the festival pictures worldwide restoration, healing and eventual rule of Christ on earth, morning and Holy Day services were devoted to an in-depth study of God’s plan of salvation for mankind. It was a time for spiritual feasting and fellowshipping with God.

Enjoyable activities included a fellowship night, the children’s, youth and singles’ activities, and the seniors’ social. Of course, the forums for the youth and singles, and for parents as well as the family/sports day, and the traditional fruit festival with plenteous delightful fruits greatly added flavor that day. The cultural variety show presentation highlighted the celebration.

One of the best things that happened during this year’s Feast of Tabernacles was the Piyesta sa Nayon (Feast in the Village) depicting the Filipinos’ propensity of giving their best whenever visitors come to their homes. Every non-Sabbath afternoon during the Feast, brethren were served the best native delicacies common to the different congregational areas in Mindanao. These afternoon snacks served more than enough opportunities for the brethren to enjoy and fellowship together in peace, harmony, and prosperity.

We were so blessed by and grateful for the Feast messages from Mr. Kubik and Dr. Ward, reminding us that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, not having received the promises, but seeing them afar off, we look to God’s Kingdom through faith.

Following afternoon services on the Eighth Day, we all sang the parting song, “United in Christ.” Most of the brethren were deeply touched and shed tears. Truly, this year was the “best Feast ever.” We all felt that we are part of God’s great family. This year’s Feast provided us with precious memories that last for a lifetime.

Raul Villacorte
Passikudah, Sri Lanka

The Pearl of the Indian Ocean—a tribute to the island’s natural beauty, it’s people and even it’s shape.

A joyous Feast was held at the Amaya Beach Resort on the East Coast of Sri Lanka. There were 67 brethren who rejoiced and worshiped God together for eight wonderful days. Inspiring messages, close family camaraderie and delicious shared meals at the hotel restaurant buffet were hallmarks of the Feast. Staying together in the same resort and having daily meals together yielded a Millennial atmosphere as Sri Lankan and overseas brethren grew together to yield a Millennial atmosphere. The messages during the Feast were both encouraging and thought-provoking.

Sri Lankans and visitors alike also enjoyed many Feast activities: A fun-filled family day with a wide variety of team games and challenges, a variety show displaying participant’s talents and humor, an exciting game of cricket, music wherever we traveled and some great splashes in the pool with friends.

A Feast tradition continued on “saree and sarong day”, as many of the ladies and men dressed in traditional Sri Lankan clothing—which led to a variety of beautiful colors and patterns for the Sabbath. Visiting members were encouraged to participate and the local ladies assisted with the draping of the saree wear.

During the Feast all brethren traveled deep into the middle of Sri Lanka, where a massive column of rock juts out from the green tropical forest. It reaches 660 feet tall and features frescoes, graffiti and landscaped gardens. The rock is known as Sigirya (see-gee-REE-yah) and holds a special place in the island’s cultural history. It was established as the stronghold of a rogue king over 1,500 years ago, and today the Sigirya complex stands as one of the earliest preserved examples of ancient urban planning. Many enjoyed the challenging climb to the top and were able to view the beauty of Sri Lanka.

A safari excursion to the Kaudulla National Park was also enjoyed for international brethren. Jeeps were driven through rough terrain as herds of wild elephants were spotted throughout the adventure. The 2018 Feast in Sri Lanka was uplifting and fulfilling for all, and encouraged God’s people to press toward the goal of His kingdom in every aspect of their lives this coming year.

For those interested in enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime experience in a part of the world many seldom visit—you are encouraged to come to “The Pearl of the Indian Ocean” and rejoice with your brothers and sisters at the Feast in 2019.

David Schreiber

Canada

Drumheller, Alberta

This is the first time we have held a Feast in Drumheller. The population of the town is about 8,000, so it made commut ing easy for the 124 attendees. There was plenty of hotel space and enough restaurants to satisfy everyone.

The Badlands Community Facility was a great venue. Two sections of the hall rooms were used, one for services and the other for banquets, a dance, choir practice and youth instruction. There were TV monitors that displayed pages from the festival brochure. The lighting and sound system was state of the art. Garrett Lesh did a great job handling the technical work, and it was his first time. Mary Jo Rydholm did a fine job organizing the music. As always, the children’s choir was a big hit. When they sang, the children wore gold crowns, which they made during youth instruction.

The messages were encouraging and were quickly posted online. Instead of sermonettes, feast coordinator John L. Bissoniere had young people come up each day and give a millennial scripture reading. Many commented on how much they enjoyed that. Also for the young people, Mr. LaBissioniere went through one character trait each day and gave a printed card summarizing them as treasure on the last day of the Feast.

Highlights include a catered dinner followed by a dance, coffee service each day, and the senior’s reception. It included a potluck and featured background music and Feast photos projected on a screen. All the leftover food was used for a group lunch on the Eighth Day. The collections more than covered the cost of the meals.

A donation of $500 was given to the Rosebud School of the Arts to help with their fundraising efforts as they try to move from famine to feast. About 40 attended a dinner theatre production of Mark Twain’s “The Diaries of Adam and Eve” and many went to the Royal Tyrrell Museum and did the Atlas Coal Mine Tour. Some took advantage of the breakfast area at the Ramada to socialize and play cards in the evenings. Comments were made that it would be nice to come back here again in the future.

Rainer Salomaa

St. John’s, Newfoundland

This year nine of us gathered to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day “at home”, in St. John’s Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. We were joined by one visitor from Spokane, Washington. St. John’s is our provincial capital and it claims to be the oldest city in North America. Good weather and warm temperatures greeted us each day.

We were able to enjoy spiritually filled sermons and sermonettes via the webcast from Panama City Beach, Florida. We especially enjoyed the Feast greetings before each service hosted by Jonathan Magee and his family. Also, we enjoyed being together as a family; enjoying meals in local restaurants, and taking in a musical concert by a local entertainer.

A highlight was a social afternoon when we were able to cook up a traditional Newfoundland Jiggs Dinner (fresh and salt meat with boiled vegetables). The fresh vegetables were supplied by our deacon and his wife from their home garden. We had a wonderful afternoon of food and fellowship.

On the Eighth Day we were able to have a fine meal together at the hotel restaurant on-site.

For those of us who, for various reasons were not able to make the long journey to the nearest Feast site, being able to receive the cybercast was truly a blessing.

Many thanks to all who made this possible for us.

L. Ellsworth Stanley

Osoyoos, British Columbia

This year the Feast in British Columbia was held in the city of Osoyoos at the Watermark Beach Resort that was located right on Osoyoos Lake. The view was spectacular and Millennial with the mountains and vineyards that surrounded the lake! The high attendance for the Feast this year was 235.

A fun family day was held on the beach with various fun games and a sand castle contest. Some of the entries to the contest included: a lion and lamb, the mountain of the Lord, BB-8 and Millennium Falcon, etc. There was also a family dinner and dance that evening with a delicious meal of beef or fish and music through the decades.

Later in the Feast teens went on a hike up Mount Kobau and later stopped by the Spotted Lake that was not so spotted this time of year. But the event ended with gelato and fellowship. The same day young adults and singles went to the Covert Farms Family Estate where they enjoyed a wine tasting of organically made wine, and then went on an adventurous hike on the property to see some spectacular views.

Near the beginning of the Feast seniors enjoyed food and fellowship at the senior luncheon. Two nights during the Feast seniors also enjoyed many entertaining games at the senior games night. There were lots of snacks and various games provided both evenings.

There were museums, lots of scrumptious food, tea, coffee, wine tasting and so much wonderful fellowship this year. It truly was a small taste of the future coming Kingdom of God and a reminder that peace will prevail.

Linda Merrick

Midland, Ontario

The Feast site in Midland continues to draw people from near and far. Nestled next to picturesque Georgian Bay (an extension of beautiful Lake Huron), Midland provides an ideal setting for the Quality Inn to host the Feast of Tabernacles year by year. Without being an “all-inclusive” site, Midland is the next best thing because most brethren stay in the main hotel and most have breakfast with each other every morning in the attractive naturally-lit atrium.

This year’s activities included a meet and greet event on the first evening, a ladies seminar about “Fun, Fad and Fashion” on day two, a games night (also on day two), a bus trip to Algonquin park on day three, a variety show on day four and Bible study on the evening of day five! Also on day five, families were invited to visit the Elmvale Jungle Zoo where exotic animals awaited to be readily seen from the wind forested pathways. Members enjoyed having lambs, goats and giraffes eat out of their hands. Also of special interest was the nearby Wye Marsh National Wildlife Area where chickadees boldly dined on bird seed held in the steady open hands of generous patrons.

Teen enjoyed two activities. The first was bowling and the second was a tour of scenic caves. Since Church of God International had a Feast site close by, the two groups combined and hosted one activity each.

The seniors brunch on the weekly Sabbath at the Last Great Day luncheon were both well attended. The hotel restaurant catered both occasions providing plenty of fresh victuals, which were well received and even generous seconds were not able to exhaust the fare abundantly placed on the serving tables.

There were 133 registered for the site. Attendance began on the opening night at 122 and spiked the next day to 163. The highest number registered on the weekly Sabbath at 183. One family was attending UCCG for the first time. They had been keeping the Feast on their own for the past few years. The special music was inspiring throughout as were the many messages. It was especially gratifying to have many U.S. transfers present along with a good number of staff from the home office!

Anthony Wasilkoff

Spencerville, Ontario

Traveling to a large Feast site can be difficult for senior members, thus a few seniors from the Ottawa, Canada, congregation were able to attend a satellite Feast site in a private home in the country. The
Caribbean

St. Georges, Grenada

The Feast of Tabernacles site for the southern Caribbean brethren was the Grenadian by Rex Resorts in St. George’s, Grenada. More than a few attendees made the remark that we could not have asked for a more Millennial setting. The Grenadian is set on one of the most beautiful beaches in all of Grenada. It is situated in a private cove, with extensive grounds full of beautiful tropical flowers and massive shade trees. There is a lake with a pathway around it, and peaceful benches scattered about. Grenada, known as the Spice Island, is lush and green, with an abundant variety of fruits, vegetables and spices. Meals at the resort featured an abundance of these, as well as other delicious treats, including some of the most delicious chocolate in the world, which Grenada also produces.

The 95 brethren in attendance hailed from Canada, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and the U.S.A., gathering to enjoy this beautiful location and wonderful fellowship. Almost everyone participated in the activities, including a bus tour of the island, a boat cruise along the coastline, an impromptu karaoke night, and a shopping excursion. Many gathered each evening to watch the spectacular sunsets. Family day featured a variety of activities, including a scavenger hunt, card/looko games, and a water balloon toss—all while enjoying the backdrop of the beautiful blue sea framed by brilliant white sand and green mountains. We had plenty of quality time with each other and really got to know our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sermons were right on target, giving us a vivid picture of the coming Kingdom of God. Special music was also inspiring. With such a wonderful Feast, it was sad to see it come to an end—we wanted to keep celebrating for another eight days! But we will cherish the wonderful memories and look forward to next year and to the ultimate fulfillment of God’s master plan.

Chuck and Mary Smith

Montego Bay, Jamaica

Our attendance of 432 at the idyllic Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa outside Montego Bay included many returning families, as well as several who were keeping the Feast for the first time. Brethren traveled from the U.S.A., Canada, England and St. Lucia to joins 80 of their Jamaican brothers and sisters.

The opening service accentuated the theme of Isaiah 45:23—how great God is and why we are here—and included the choir singing “The Lion and the Lamb,” which emphasized “every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb.” This was very moving, and set the tone for the rest of the uplifting messages and inspiring special music during the Feast.

Highlights for fellowship comprised of a ladies’ mingle with gift exchange, men’s summit, outdoor teen Bible study and morning teen hospitality, two day passes (for Jamaican brethren to enjoy meals and activities on the hotel property), children’s craft activities and choir, a widow’s tea, and an opportunity for some to enjoy refreshments at the nearby villa where the Ocho Rios brethren stayed.

Evening activities included a Bible study (“A World of Plenty—Feeding the Large Population in the World Tomorrow”), a seminar (“How to Capture God’s Miraculous Vision”), Jamaican Night (history, culture and entertainment hosted by the local brethren), two hymn-sings and two family dances.

Many families took advantage of this all-inclusive festival location to reunite with each other and to celebrate. It was a joy to see generations spending time together at meals, on the beach, in the pool and at the various activities. The hotel staff repeatedly commented on how wonderful it was to serve our group and work with our brethren.

Joe and Mary Moulton

Europe

Llandudno, Wales

Over 180 brethren from around the United Kingdom and five other locations around the world enjoyed a wonderful and spiritually uplifting Feast in the beautiful seaside town of Llandudno, situated on the North Coast of Wales.

God certainly blessed His Feast here by providing us with greatly talented speakers, musicians and a host of people who gave selflessly of their time to serve so that all could enjoy a Feast to be remembered. God provided great weather throughout the eight days, which even the locals continually commented upon.

The theme of the Feast was “God’s Family of Firstfruits,” and the family theme was evident throughout the eight days in both the messages and the loving support and inclusion felt by all who were present.

The first evening provided attendees with the opportunity to get to share stories that helped everyone get to know each other better. From the subsequent comments, this event was among the highlights of the Feast and it certainly reinforced the theme.

Feastgoers enjoyed an outing to the historic city of Chester with its Roman defensive walls still visible around the old city center, and the largest permanent amphitheater, seating 7,000 people for entertainment spectacles. The city was abandoned by the Romans in the fifth century.

For the train enthusiasts there was an opportunity to enjoy a beautiful 13 mile scenic trip to Ffestiniog on the oldest operating narrow-gauge railway, to see where the slate was mined.

Barry Lavers

Kuressaare, Saaremaa, Estonia

This year, 27 years following the demise of godless communism, God chose to place His name for the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast this year was held on the island of Saaremaa in the Baltic Sea, a strategic sea gate of Russia (Genesis 22:17).

There were 40 people representing seven different nations, speaking nine or more different first languages, who held holy convocations in accordance with Leviticus 23. Most people spoke a modicum of English. Two people were keeping their first feast while another three were keeping their 60th or more.

In addition to the Feast video, six local speakers—including Peter Eddington (UGC operations manager of media and communications services) and David Nunn from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma—espoused from God’s Word about the coming Kingdom of God. Central to the messages was the fact that the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains. One message even detailed the dramatic physical changes in a lion’s

Jeff and Alisa Lockhart

Suriname

For the first time ever in the history of the Church of God, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated this year in Suriname, South America.

An average of 42 brethren from as far as the Netherlands, California, Washington, Michigan and Pennsylvania, not to forget our local brethren from Suriname, celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful Millennial setting of the White Beach Resort. For many of our Surinamese brethren it was their first Feast ever and their excitement was bountiful.

Situated on the Suriname River, the resort offered us not only beauty and convenience but privacy, which made our time more intimate and enjoyable.

We were served many traditional Suriname dishes, which come from several ethnic backgrounds and drinks made from the different fruits grown only in Suriname.

The physical food was truly a different experience for the American brethren, which was topped only by the spiritual food offered to us all.

Tours to Joden Savanah (the ruins of a Jewish colony) and to the capital city of Paramaribo proved to be an educational experience. Brethren were inspired by the diversity of people and the tolerance of religion that exists in Suriname. We visited the beautiful, newly constructed, American embassy, along the lovely area called Palm Garden, where there are more than 1,000 palm trees, some more than 300 years old.

The Feast of Tabernacles in Suriname was a great success, proven by the many brethren that conveyed their desire to come back next year!

Stan and Barbara Braumuller
In Estonia, we had excellent cooperation by everyone attending to be optimal. The soloists and choral members provided excellent special music for every service, which is quite a feat for a small Feast site. A 40-person site needs participation in activities by everyone attending to be optimal. In Estonia, we had excellent cooperation of all guests in serving and in enjoyment.

We are instructed to keep the Feast reflecting the abundance God has promised to all mankind. In a unique way, abundance was pictured in Estonia by sharing a BBQ of hot smoked tenderloin of mOOSE, tenderloin of beef and filet of salmon, all from the local area. A bus tour of the island of Muhu was enjoyed by all on our only rainy day during the Feast. A Hawaiian reception, hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Brad Ellis and Sally Nxonox, held in the Baltic Sea was a crowning touch. A Bible study was given by David Nunn on the subject of the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the development of the Bible. Peter Edington presented a Bible study updating how UCG is preaching the gospel around the world.

Rejoicing is a very natural response toward keeping God's Feast. Rejoicing can only be manifested at this and other Feast sites by people who understand that they are living out a prophecy, which in time will become a reality. In the light of that truth, rejoicing is a deeply emotional and lasting experience.

—Johnnie Lambert

Evian-les-Bains, France

The all-inclusive, Evian VVF camp in Evian-les-Bain on the shores of Lake Geneva welcomed approximately 290 travelers from France and around the world for this year's Feast in France. We were blessed with the largest number of visitors since the early 1990s, providing for wonderful messages and an outstanding special music program. In addition to our daily services alternating between French and English, we enjoyed a special hymn singing hour (all the English speakers learned to sing in French), interactive Bible studies for English and French speakers, youth festival instruction and a wonderful talent show and dance—we really made an impression on the resort staff in how people can have good, clean fun! Having a bounce house for the kids made a big impression too! We rejoiced in exceptionally beautiful weather and with an equally beautiful spirit of love and concern one for another. So many people pitched in and contributed to making the eight days very special.

We enjoyed excursions to the medieval town of Gruyères, famous for its cheese and beautiful alpine views, as well as Chamonix where many visited a glacier and ice cave museum, and a cable-car ride for beautiful views of western Europe's highest mountain, the Mont Blanc. We also visited the lakeside village of Yvoire and the high-alpine mountain pastures of Les Linderets. Many just enjoyed the lakefront promenade and local Evian restaurants with one feastgoer bringing her empty water bottles and helping herself to the free Evian water flowing from the fountain in the town square.

What really made the Feast special was just being able to spend time together, all in one place over a meal, or over a nice piece of blueberry pie overlooking the mountains on one of the excursions, after dinner at the lakefront bar, or jogging together in the morning along the lake. It's God's people being together and His Holy Spirit being poured out abundantly that we all treasure.

—Tim Pebworth

Schluchsee, Germany

For the 20th time in a row, brethren from around the world celebrated an amazing Feast of Tabernacles in Schluchsee, Germany—224 people from nine countries. The Feast was blessed with stunning, sunny weather and a beautiful fall environment in the Black Forest.

The daily messages during services pointed to the coming Kingdom and conveyed a sense of urgency, hope and reassurance. Special music proved to be a real highlight and contributed to the festive atmosphere.

Attendees enjoyed a wide variety of activities, including a welcome evening, women’s brunch, women’s and men’s discussion, teen studies, children’s Bible lessons, a formal dance evening with a live musician, a karaoke evening and a farewell evening.

This year’s bus tour went to Colmar, France. The day was wonderful with the charm of the old town of Colmar, the beautiful sunny weather, Elsassian chocolates and cakes, and a quaint river walk through Little Venice.

Children and their parents had the opportunity to test their senses at the Haus der Sinne in Grafenhausen. Volleyball and senior bowling were highlights for the sporty. During the Feast three new members were baptized and welcomed to God’s family, and Heinz Wilsberg was ordained into the ministry.

As always, time flew by quickly, but the atmosphere of unity, peace and joy made it another memorable feast.

—Jesmina Allaoua

Latin America

Maloca de Moscou, Brazil

The Feast in Brazil was held in the peaceful and calm setting just outside of Boa Vista. Services were held on a covered patio each day, which was surrounded by beautiful swaying palm trees.

There were 57 brethren who attended from Maloca de Moscou and Guyana. There were a couple of guests who attended during the Feast, as well, which added to our highest attendance during the Feast of 62.

There were many inspiring and uplifting messages about God’s great plan of Christ’s return to this earth, the peace and joy we will experience during the Millennium and the Kingdom of God. Other inspiring messages were given on child-rearing, marriage and the spiritual organization of the world tomorrow.

Feast activities included a party for the children and teens. Both the children and teens enjoyed the treats that were provided while they painted and decorated bottles. The ladies enjoyed an afternoon tea and were provided with bottles and T-shirts to paint and decorate.

The teens took their turn in preparing breakfast and lunch one day while the men prepared and served lunch on the Last Great Day—what a treat!

The brethren were very touched by the beautiful, handcrafted card that was presented to them from the Montreal, Canada congregation.

A very special thanks to the generosity of the brethren in the Bakersfield, California and the Las Vegas, Nevada, congregations for helping to make the Feast so special for the brethren.

Plans are underway for next year’s Feast in Brazil in the same location. Improvements and alterations will be made to the existing site.

The Feast in Brazil was a success and enjoyed by all who attended.

—Jorge and Kathy de Campos

Cochabamba, Bolivia

For the fifth consecutive time, we had 26 brethren who celebrated the Feast in Bolivia at the Hotel Regina Resort and Convention Center in the city of Cochabamba, with excellent facilities and service. The weather was quite nice allowing us to carry out all the outdoor activities, including swimming in its heated pools.

There were fine activities outside the hotel, including a wedding of Bayron Martinez and Bonny Enriquez. We had two outings to tour the city and have a group meal at a restaurant. We also had a dance for all and a nice tea party.

Services were quite inspiring and focused on the coming Kingdom of God. We also had three Bible studies, and the
children also had Bible studies for them. The children were the ones who enjoyed the heated pools the most. There were two baptisms.

God poured out His blessings on this small group of His flock and we are very thankful for the opportunity to meet in this beautiful place in Bolivia where He placed His name.

Raul Machicao

Olmue, Chile

For the sixth year in a row, we were able to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the beautiful valley of Olmue, which is located 60 miles north of Santiago, the capital of Chile. The weather was a bit chillier than usual but we didn't have any rain and carried out all the outdoor activities. We had 124 brethren attend from Argentina, Peru, Brazil and the U.S.A.

As in past years, we had a number of activities for the different age groups. We had a children's party with 15 attending by the pool. The youth had a barbecue and then a dance. We also had a family dance and the traditional talent night with a dinner prepared by members of the Spokesmen's Club. We also had a nice excursion to a nearby mountaintop. Messages focused mostly on the coming Kingdom of God.

I was also able to travel with my wife to the Feast in northern Argentina to the state of Misiones, where the brethren celebrated it in two areas. We met with a group of 50 brethren in the first site, Campo Viera. On the Sabbath, after services there was a barbecue and on the next morning we visited the second Feast site in Ameghino. We had morning services and a potluck afterward.

As always, time flew by quickly but in the end, we felt that we had just enjoyed the best Feast of our lives.

Jaime Gallardo

Cartagena, Colombia

Members from Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, Jamaica, the Netherlands and the U.S.A. celebrated this year's Feast in Cartagena, Colombia. It was imbued with joy and enthusiasm to be together as one family! We had a high attendance of 93 with many brethren attending their first Feast ever.

With nearly all in attendance staying at the Hotel Regatta Cartagena, a community of family was achieved by worshiping, eating, fellowshipping, playing, dancing and learning together. One couldn't leave his or her room without meeting another member in the common areas of the hotel. Spiritually the brethren learned and grew at the daily services, an evening Bible study, and a focused education seminar on the subject “Gratitude Is an Antidote.” The expression of this topic added to the joy enjoyed during the Feast. Attendance at the evening study and seminar was inspiring.

Activities such as karaoke, talent night, family dance and the beach party were planned in and near the hotel so that all could participate. A new activity was an ice cream social on the evening before the Eighth Day. We were all able to enjoy one last night of fellowshipping before most returned home the next evening.

Two highlights of joy during the Feast were the baptism of one individual and the blessing of two children. Our physical and spiritual family is growing in Colombia.

Though attending from many nations, we all united in God's Spirit to experience a time when peace will abound on the earth! God blessed us with peace and harmony as we learned to be patient waiting in line at the restaurant or for the elevators. Conversation abounded and spirits were joyful as we learned to live in unity. All too soon, the Feast ended and we said, “goodbye for now.” Many brethren would not see each other until the next Feast, but the messages we heard, conversations and bonding would carry us through until we meet again.

Scott and Gayle Hoefer

Panajachel, Guatemala

The Feast of Tabernacles was again carried out in Panajachel, Guatemala, on the shore of the famous Lake Atitlan, with the purpose of honoring God the Father and Jesus Christ. We had 229 in attendance from Guatemala, the U.S.A., Central America and Australia.

There was an atmosphere of peace, harmony and cooperation. We were also blessed with good weather.

There were numerous activities and many special music performances with different choirs of children, youth and adults. It was an edifying Feast with messages explaining the coming Kingdom of God to provide mankind with the true values of love, justice and mercy.

We are sure God was honored through every one of the activities because we could experience His blessings in the harmony and unity felt among the brethren.

Israel Robledo

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

For the eighth year in a row, a hotel Friendly Vallarta, an all-inclusive beach and spa resort in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, welcomed us with open arms to hold the Feast there.

There were 650 in attendance from seven different countries (Mexico, U.S.A., Canada, Guatemala, Chile, U.K., and Panama). The number allowed us to have the exclusive use of the hotel, its staff, meals and activities, making it very relaxing and enjoyable. Five restaurants free of charge (including a pizza oven to serve custom-made pizzas) served Italian, Mexican, American and Sushi meals.

Although the weather outlook was for rain during the week of the Feast, and hurricane Rosa was headed our way, it turned north in time and we had excellent weather to carry out all the many outdoor activities. We thank God for providing protection and the right weather during the Feast!

The brethren commented on the fine spiritual messages, also directed to our youth and filled with encouragement. We had a taste of what the Millennium will be like to maintain the hope that one day we will be part of it and what the fundamentals of the Kingdom of God are all about. The special music organized by Carmella Weis and the choir director Jacob Sutherland was outstanding, with a Feast choir, lights shine to the local community. Brethren gave 562 pounds of food and nearly $1,000 to the Food Bank of Alaska! Also, since we had many stuffed Kingdom-type animals left over after our stuffed animal giveaway, several dozen toys were donated to Providence Hospital. Staff said every toy would be used!

Many brethren toured a dog kennel, operated by the famous four-time Iditarod champion Martin Buser, and saw and petted dozens of happy and friendly sled dogs. And about 280 traveled on the Alaskan Railroad Train to view beautiful mountains and glaciers. We even saw moose, and a few caught a glimpse of a bear. The Alaskan wilderness is a place to be bedazzled by God's marvelous creation!

We thank Almighty God for His incredible Feast blessings!

Vince Szymkowiak

Bend-Redmond, Oregon

This year was the 20th anniversary of the Bend-Redmond site, where more than 500 of God's people kept the Feast this year. The weather was especially nice with sunny skies most of the week and temperatures climbing into the low 80s. This year we saw a lot of visitors from the eastern portion of the country, as well as locals who all had a wonderful time getting to know the many travelers.

The messages focused on the Millennial reign of Christ while stressing family, fellowshipping and how to make the most of your Feast experience. There were three Bible studies this year: one for the teens, one for the young adults and a festival Bible study.
study for all. The teens went on quite an adventure with a Bible study walk-and-talk through a mile-long lava river cave. The complete darkness gave an excellent opportunity to discuss light and darkness, and how with God there is just light, but with this world there are no absolutes, and what light you see is always followed by some darkness.

The young adults also had a combined activity and Bible study where they had a pizza social while discussing the heavenly temple that exists in all to whom God gives His Spirit. The festival Bible study was a PowerPoint presentation of the Millennial temple that will be built on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and what it might look like.

There were a number of highlights this year. After enjoying the children’s choir and split sermons at services on family day, we went to the High Desert Museum, where we took part in a scavenger hunt as we visited this Smithsonian partner museum focused on the history of the region and its wildlife. We were treated to up-close views of bobcats, otters, reptiles and birds of prey, as well as many exhibits that let you experience life over the last few hundred years.

There was even a working sawmill and a pioneer town to explore. Later that night, we enjoyed our 20th anniversary dance. We returned to Galveston Island to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. Services were held in the crater of an extinct volcano.

For family day, we transformed the auditorium into a western-themed carnival with prizes for all ages. Feasters competed for a grand prize in pin the tail on the donkey, which was surprisingly more popular with the adults than children! Many others also enjoyed board games and corn hole. Our family day fun continued with a country music show featuring performances from some of our musically talented brethren.

The teens visited an escape room as a team challenge. Later in the week, we continued the Cincinnati tradition of a classic team challenge. Later in the week, we continued the Cincinnati tradition of a classic movie night with popcorn and a screening of a black-and-white comedy from 1936, “My Man Godfrey.”

We welcomed the Eighth Day with an inspiring evening hymn sing. As coordinator, this was the highlight of my Feast, joyfully singing praises with God’s people as we looked forward to that final step in God’s plan to reconcile humanity and wipe away every tear.

In 2018, the United Church of God returned to Galveston Island to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. Services were held in the beautiful Galveston Convention Center. Each day as brethren gathered for services, they could look out on Galveston Bay.

The Feast opened on Sunday night with a Focus on the Feast welcome video from the home office, the Festival choir and a sermon focusing on God’s instruction to rejoice at the Feast. On the first holy day 354 attendees were present to hear God’s word expounded. Gary Petry spoke of God’s Kingdom being established and one of the chief outcomes will be the opening of the eyes of the spiritually blind. It will be an amazing time as those who have lived in darkness will, for the first time be able to see what God has planned for all mankind.

Throughout the remainder of the week the ministry focused the brethren on the coming Millennial Kingdom, with messages concerning not losing our spiritual vision, being ready to serve in the Kingdom, putting into practice now the culture of the Kingdom, making God’s priorities our priorities, walking by faith, the application of God’s justice, enduring to the end, and why the Eighth Day is the focal point of all God’s Holy Days.

On Friday evening, Bible studies were held for teens and adults. In the main Bible study Gary Petry focused on what is revealed in Revelation 17 and 18, and the teens focused on God’s vision imparted to all at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Pre-teens also enjoyed two sessions helping them better understand the importance of God’s vision for them even at a young age. Also the youth choir performed wonderful renditions “Hallelujah Our God Reigns” and “I Sing for Joy” led by Kathleen Henry.

Additionally, the special music added to the uplifting Feast environment by providing praises to God. The choir was led by Jason Fritts.

As the Feast began on Sunday evening, the entire week was forecast for clouds and rain. But our God watches over His people as they gather for the Feast. Yes, there was rain throughout the week, but the rain stopped and cleared enough to allow the Galveston Feasters to enjoy some of the physical aspects of Galveston: the beaches, restaurants, and historical features of the island. Highlights of the activities available included family day at Moody Gardens and Sunday at the Pleasure Pier theme park.

The Feast in Galveston was a wonderful spiritual and physical foretaste of God’s coming Kingdom.

Gary Smith
Africa & Canada

Ivory Coast

Zimbabwe

Osoyoos, British Colombia

DR Congo

Diani, Kenya

Ogembo, Kenya

Midland, Ontario

Nigeria

Ghana

St. John’s, Newfoundland

Blantyre, Malawi

Margate, South Africa

Nkhwazi, Malawi

Zambia

Drumheller, Alberta

Ottawa, Ontario
Asia/Pacific

Manila, Philippines

Sakhangyi, Myanmar

Agra, India

Hong Kong, China

Davao, Philippines

Penang, Malaysia

Passikudah, Sri Lanka

Meriumbula, Australia

Rockingham, Australia

Visayas, Philippines

Orewa, New Zealand
Europe/British Isles & Latin America

Maloca de Moscou, Brazil

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Olmue, Chile

Saaremaa, Estonia

Schuchsee, Germany

Llandudno, Wales

Cochabamba, Bolivia

Evian-les-Bains, France

Cartegena, Colombia

Panajchel, Guatemala
United States & Caribbean

St. Georges, Grenada
Anchorage, Alaska
Panama City Beach, Florida
Bend-Redmond, Oregon
Snowshoe, West Virginia
Cincinnati, Ohio
Branson, Missouri
Montego Bay, Jamaica
Big Sandy, Texas
Phoenix, Arizona
Montego Bay, Jamaica
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin
Lake George, New York
Jekyll Island, Georgia
Steamboat Springs, Colorado
Tucson, Arizona
Suriname
Glacier Country, Montana
Big Sandy, Texas
United Church of God, an International Association

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building of the Glacier Bible Camp. Comfortable seats, a new heating system, and plenty of room allowed all to enjoy the variety of spiritual food that God prepared and presented by the many elders and deacons attending this site.

In addition to beautiful, inspiring special music and choir that enhanced our services, for the first year at the Montana site we had an ensemble that accompanied the congregational hymn singing. This included brass instruments (tuba, baritone, trumpet) as well as strings (violins, cello) and a flute. On family day the children’s choir delighted us. In addition to the daily services there was also a special educational seminar, adult Bible study, young adults Bible study and a teen Bible study. On the eve of the Eighth Day there was also a rousing hymn-sing that many enjoyed.

Tuesday night many attended the family western dance held at the Whitefish Community Center. A wide variety of music kept the dance floor busy, while many just enjoyed fellowship and socializing. After services on Wednesday, family day was held at the Glacier Bible Camp park that was augmented by a four-lane climbing wall, two bungee cord trampolines and a bounce house for the toddlers and young children. There were also a number of special activities set up for the younger kids. Activities included gaga ball, miniature golf, carpet bowling, horseshoes, golf and the playground toys.

Thursday we had early services for what is called “Glacier Day”—a time for all who wanted to explore Glacier National park or the beauty of Flathead Lake. Friday was the traditional ladies tea, with 112 ladies and young ladies participating. Saturday evening many enjoyed an evening of bowling in Whitefish where we took over all 16 lanes. Sunday was the second day we had a seniors luncheon and it was also a tremendous success.

The Glacier Country site provides unique opportunities for fellowship with many staying at the camp in the lodges or in their own RV’s, trailers or tents. On-site meals are available for all and many friendships are made and renewed over shared meals in the camp dining hall.

We certainly thank God for blessing us with a wonderful Feast in Glacier Country Montana!

Dan Deininger

Jekyll Island, Georgia

Beautiful weather and wonderful fellowship highlighted the Feast for over 560 attendees who assembled to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Jekyll Island this year.

The Feast has been kept in Jekyll Island since 1963, and numerous brethren commented on the first Feast ever kept in Jekyll Island under the giant tent once a staple of the Jekyll feast site. Now the site has a modern convention center that is a beautiful setting, along with numerous hotels, shops and restaurants in the area. Jekyll Island has changed in numerous ways but the charm of the island continues to attract members to this site for their Feast experiences.

The messages at this Feast of Tabernacles once again pointed us to the coming Kingdom of God and the focus of God’s plan for mankind. The high attendance was 563, and the joy of fellowshipping together made this another wonderful Feast season.

Other than excellent sermons and services, we had the following activities: a singles dinner, a teen pizza get-together, a family day with a barbecue lunch, and a family fun show and dance. We also had a service project for the Glynn Community Crisis Center, in which five van loads of supplies were provided.

As always, one of the highlights was the senior luncheon in which we honored those seniors who, in many cases, have served in the congregations for decades.

We were truly blessed again this year with protection, inspiration and amazing opportunities for fellowship. We hope many more will be able to enjoy the Feast experience of Jekyll Island for years to come.

Stan Martin

Lake George, New York

The magnificent beauty surrounding Lake George set the stage for an even more beautiful Feast of Tabernacles. Special activities were planned ahead of time to allow for more meaningful fellowship opportunities. Family day was held at a ranch with young and old joining in for indoor games, barbecue, karaoke and horseback rides. Later in the week most attendees set off on a sunset dinner cruise, which included a dance and an opportunity to really take in the beauty of Lake George.

Friday evening brought the brethren in for a special roundtable-style discussion. Attendees broke into small groups and rotated with each new topic with a facilitator assigned to each group to help keep the discussion moving. Topics revolved around unity in the Church and how we can personally contribute to peacemaking and edification within our congregations.

Preteens began opening night with a “kid zone,” including Holy Day stations with activities including a much loved crayon structure, along with a great way for kids to stretch their legs and get their mindset on God’s plan before opening services even began. Throughout the week, the preteens had a chance to memorize scriptures and recite them to any one of three elders or leaders who would be wearing a colorful lanyard each day at services. When they successfully recited their memory verse, they received a card and sticker to add to their own lanyard. It was a lot of fun and a wonderful way for the preteens to connect with the ministry and leaders.

The teens enjoyed high ropes and zipline course on what was supposed to be a stormy afternoon. God stopped the rain as we arrived at the Adirondack Extreme course, and as the last teens finished the course and walked out, the rain began again! Last but certainly not least, the senior brunch was lovely with many sharing stories from their past.

For community outreach we collected toiletry items for a local homeless teen shelter—many supplies and cash donations were delivered to very grateful recipients. The generosity of the brethren in contributing to “Families Helping Families” was inspiring. As a result, all who wanted to attend the special activities during the Feast had an opportunity to do so.

It was evident that God gathered together a special group in Lake George unified in purpose, passion and by their love for God and for one another!

Jay and Jennifer Ledbetter

Oceanside, California

There were 409 brethren who rejoiced before God for one week plus a day at the Q.L.N. Center in Oceanside, California. The one-story facility’s cheery interior created an intimate and wonderful festival home. Approximately 40 percent of the audience attended here for the first time. It certainly made for a vibrant gathering. The 40-member choir and instrumental ensemble certainly added to our sense of worship before God. After the final Eighth Day message, Ingrid Helge and Greg Hilgen sang “The New Jerusalem” by Michael Card with the congregation rising and joining in on the chorus as PowerPoint pictures of the heavenly Jerusalem and the starry universe were displayed in the background.

Those attending Oceanside were able to partake of our standard church services, plus a special night activity. We welcomed the Sabbath with a “hymn-sing” accompanied by an interactive Bible study presented by Robin Webber, discussing what had we learned this year at the Feast to prepare us to be teachers in the wonderful World Tomorrow. There was also an interactive Sabbath teen class and a couple of festival classes for younger children.

There was a full afternoon of a two-part workshop presentation by Jon Garnant and Jonathan Garnant regarding financial stewardship based on biblical principles to guide people towards self-sustaining retirement years. The seniors’ banquet, which is always a festival highlight, was attended by 110 “seasoned citizens” and ministerial couples who were greeted by a setting from the 1920s. They were graciously served—always entertained—by our young adults and teenagers.

Beyond services and Bible studies, Oceanside attendees were able to enjoy the nearby sites of the La Jolla and Del Mar coastlines, Oceanside Harbor, the San Diego Zoo and Balboa Park, Sea World on Mission Bay, Old Town San Diego and nearby Legoland. Many simply settled for “down time” with family and brethren resting on the warm sandy beaches of Oceanside and nearby Carlsbad. The weather was generally 70 to 80 degrees, which was ideal for the activities at hand.

Most importantly, the entire membership of all ages came prepared to fully be involved in a spiritual Feast. They came prepared to give of themselves, volunteer on a moment’s notice, and share their smiles, warmth and helping hand to all they encountered. Attendance at all activities was up! We plan to utilize the Q.L.N. Center in Oceanside again next year.

Robin Webber

Panama City Beach, Florida

God blessed us in Panama City Beach, Florida, with great sermons, peaceful assemblies, uplifting music, and exceptional weather. Inspiring messages focused our minds and hearts on the coming Kingdom of God. They were positive, grounded and focused on sound doctrine and the wonderful world tomorrow! We were privileged to hear stirring performances by the Feast choir, the children’s choir, instrumentalists and vocalists. Although 920 were registered for the Feast, our highest attendance was 1,062, and for five days we counted well over 1,000 attendees. Each day the brethren took full advantage of fellowshipping with each other (Malachi 3:16); the grand ballroom was filled with peace and joy.

Family activities included a happy and productive afternoon at Rock-it! Lanes, punctuated by a very well-attended family dance in the evening with sumptuous refreshments. The teens enjoyed a lively dance the night before family day, tasty and filling refreshments, a light show and music that kept them on the dance floor. They also enjoyed two hospitals with refreshments. Additionally, our young adults shared two refreshing hospitality and good fellowship. Youth instruction classes were well attended and our ministerial/department head hospitality was second to none with special and delicious refreshments. You could say this was a feast of itself.

Jay and Jennifer Ledbetter

United Church of God, an International Association

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Phoenix, Arizona

Phoenix, Arizona, provided a wonderful festival atmosphere for all 172 Feastgoers to enjoy God’s festival through fellowship, sermons, and activities of all kinds. The Feast started on opening night with God’s beautiful festival moon overhead announcing the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles 2018.

We were admonished to be careful about the things that are important and rejoice, always ready to give the gift of peace. A hospitality hour preceded the service on the first holy day. The sermon prepared everyone’s heart and mind to keep the Feast as God commanded, seeking to learn throughout the eight days. With that jump-start, everyone was ready to help make this the best Feast ever.

The second day offered a webcast from Bend, Oregon, and was set aside for family day at Lakes Unlimited, an arcade that included various rides for the children. After a hospitality hour and morning services, the third day provided one of the activity highlights of the week: a dinner cruise on the Dolly Steamboat at Canyon Lake. Everyone loaded onto the bus, rode the winding trail to the canyon, boarded the Dolly Steamboat and cruised around the beautiful, peaceful lake with high, colorful canyon walls. Several bald eagles and bighorn sheep were spotted along the way and, of course, the view was exhilarating and the sunset exhibited the glory of God’s creation!

Stars could actually be seen in the night sky! More inspiring sermons on day four, now already half-way through the festival! Day five included morning services followed by the seniors’ luncheon served by the youth of the Church, with Bible trivia questions that challenged the mind. Brethren were united all around the globe on the sixth day to hear uplifting messages given by Donald Ward and Victor Kubik. On day seven, a hospitality hour provided one more opportunity to fellowship with newly made friends. And, of course, for the children, we had the grand stuffed animal give-away! Where, oh where, do we pack our new, furry friend?

On the Last Great Day of hope, there were morning services followed by a catered luncheon. And then our last spiritual meal before going to our various homes and trying to honor God by living by every word led us to during one of the best feasts ever!

Pat Armstead

Tucson, Arizona

Warm, sunny Tucson, Arizona, was once again a satellite Feast site for our local brethren who were unable to travel to other festival locations. Our high attendance was about 40 for the first Holy Day. Most days we had over 30 people in attendance. This year’s Feast of Tabernacles was held at the beautiful Hampton Inn and Suites. Their staff was very gracious and accommodating.

Our local church hosts ensured that the webcast from Bend, Oregon, went smoothly on our end. They also made everyone feel welcome and loved. You could see, feel, and hear all the joy in that cozy meeting room. After services, the brethren stayed to fellowship and enjoy additional time spent with one another over snacks and drinks.

As has been our Feast custom for the last few years we had a catered Mexican luncheon on the Eighth Day. Over 30 people enjoyed this delicious physical feast, but ultimately it was the inspiring, captivating and uplifting spiritual food during God’s Feast of Tabernacles that will sustain us and encourage us to always look forward to the Millennium and God’s coming Kingdom.

Marti Reyes Carreon

Snowshoe, West Virginia

More than 450 people gathered on top of Snowshoe Mountain in West Virginia to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This is our first time back to Snowshoe in eight years, and this is a wonderful feast site for individuals looking for a semi-secluded location.

Registration showed a diverse mixture of people in all age categories. We had 78 seniors, 87 children, 57 teenagers and 98 young adults in addition to all of the other adults registered to attend. Services were held in the expo center (also called the Big Top) and was just the right size for our attendance this year, with enough seating for everyone, plus plenty of room to walk around and fellowship. There was certainly room for more people if needed, but we enjoyed the extra space to move about before and after services.

The Feast started out with foggy weather, which was actually clouds passing over the mountains. This made for some interesting photographs of brethren walking through the clouds on the brick-paved streets of the village. The skies cleared and the sun came out for the last half of the Feast, making the views of the surrounding mountains and valleys awe-inspiring. It was breathtaking to see the beauty of God’s creation in this part of the world.

There were quite a few activities available on the mountain, including zip-lining, mountain biking, off-road Segway rentals, ATV rentals, paddle boating, canoeing, as well as beautiful views on the two ski lifts.

All of the messages were inspirational and focused on what it will be like during the period of the Millennium and the Eighth Day. This year we had two general Bible studies, one titled “Ark of the Covenant” on Tuesday evening and the other titled “Keeping a Holy Convocation” on Friday evening.

The special music was amazing, exceeding all expectations. We were blessed to have a large adult choir, a teen and young adult choir, a children’s choir and also a 15-piece instrumental ensemble that accompanied hymns as well as performed special music.

The atmosphere and cooperation of all the brethren at this site was truly inspiring and uplifting. Everyone seemed ready for services to begin every day and then ready to relax, walk around the village and visit with one another during the afternoon and evenings.

Len Martin

Steamboat Springs, Colorado

A Feast site is usually evaluated by the messages, the weather, the activities and the spirit of fellowship. Steamboat Springs achieved, if not surpassed, all expectations with about 600 attendees. Perfect weather and the fall colors improved each day. Most members were able to stay on-site for housing, which allows for more gathering, meeting and making new friends.

The family day activity was a hit with a ride up Mount Werner on a gondola with lunch and games at the top. The altitude is 6,732 feet, and it was a perfectly clear day for viewing and pictures. At the bottom, a roller coaster and miniature golf were available. Nearly 60 teens hiked up to Fish Creek Falls for a scenic view and eating pizza.

Other social activities included a family dance with karaoke, ice skating with half the rink used for bumper cars, a seniors lunch with entertainment and many drop-ins. Steamboat Springs features all aspects of dining for any price point and type of cuisine. The traditional stuffed animals for children was a hit with so many extra animals that we let grandparents and teenagers select some too.

The many volunteers, the members and the fellowship all perfectly pictured the coming peace of God’s Kingdom.

Charles Metear

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Among the 536 people attending this year we had 22 of the 50 states represented, as well as three nations in addition to the U.S.A.: Australia, Canada and Ghana.

One of the characteristic and best-loved features of the Feast site here is the special music. The orchestra and choir, about 60 strong, presented a wide selection of music that greatly enhanced the worship of our great Father and Elder Brother Jesus Christ.

Activities in the Dells’ scenic beauty enhanced the worship of our Creator and served as a setting to enjoy such outdoor activities as golf, hiking, touring the local waterways in the famous “ducks” and many other refreshing activities set in nature. There was also a family day “game night and fellowship social” attended by 125. The members enjoyed getting together as families or in groups to play their favorite card or board games. This was enhanced by an assortment of snacks to make the evening more enjoyable.

In addition to our 10 church services, we had four Bible studies: the young adults dinner and Bible study “Being a Vessel of Honor”; general Bible studies “Is God Through Teaching Us?” and an “Overview of the Book of Ecclesiastes,” plus a teen-oriented Bible study: “What Protection Do I Have?” All of this was foundational to the brethren’s inspiration, edification and worship of our great God.

While this year’s Feast may be over we invite you to come and join us next year! The site has a long and rich history as a venue for God’s people gathering for the Feast of Tabernacles. For more than 150 years, Wisconsin Dells has been known as a great destination with tons of fun family attractions that bring over 3 million visitors to the Dells each year. The Dells is home to themed lodging with many featuring huge indoor water parks, many popular restaurants and tons of shopping.

Randy D’Alessandro

United Church of God, an International Association
Christianity in our world today is facing an uphill battle against secularism, atheism and all other kinds of “isms.” And, in the Church of God, the battle is even more pronounced because the message we bring is found to be unpopular even amongst those who call themselves Christians! Not only are we asking our readers and viewers to keep the Sabbath, but to turn their lives right-side-out in so many other ways— and genuinely follow Jesus Christ. It’s not a popular message!

But despite these challenges, our job is to let the world—all nations—know of the coming Kingdom of God—not exactly the way that it’s going to come, but that it will come—and to instruct and give people some hope.

We must give people a world to look forward to—true hope. We must not back away from the urgency and the drive to do the work of God. This is why we’re a part of the firstfruits now, and this role must be taken seriously!

The message is the same

There are many ways we are now able to “broadcast” the gospel. It is so much more than just the printed word or wireless radio. Much has advanced because of satellite television and the Internet—particularly through streaming video technology. It’s not just regular TV anymore.

Ours is a work of spreading the gospel around the world. We have a divine, scriptural commission to preach the good news.

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The Importance of Our Words

Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, The Christian Recorder, March 1862, where it states, “Remember the old adage, ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.’” However, even this publication simply cites, “the old adage,”

The fact is, words do hurt!

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Preaching the Gospel in a Difficult Clime

Despite these challenges, our job is to let the world—all nations—know of the Kingdom of God coming. It is a work of making disciples. God the Father is the One who determines who the disciples are. But we have to sow the seed broadly, and then God will determine where the fertile soil is. At the same time, not everybody is going to respond, so it will be a witness as well.

Are you doing your part in preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God?
Beware of the Doldrums!

by Andy Duran

It’s an odd word, doldrum, but maybe you’ve heard the term used. It seems to have its origins somewhere in the 18th century, specifically for maritime usage. The term refers to a region in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans around the equator where winds would stop, causing an eerie, calm water to reside.

In today’s reality, with strong engine-driving ships, a calm and windless water is no problem. However, in earlier times, the main mode of ship travel was wind pushing the ship’s sails. In this period of sea travel, it would have been quite troubling to be caught in the doldrums. If caught in this inactive zone, the absence of wind could cause a long delay, perhaps trapping a ship and its crew for days or even weeks. Being trapped for weeks could be a serious issue. With no communication with the outside world, there was no immediate rescue for these crews. Food and drinking water rations would need to be strictly enforced, and even then, survival wasn’t guaranteed.

Now when we hear the word doldrums today, it is used more as a turn of phrase rather than its seafaring origins. One might be asked if they have a case of the doldrums? And they would know they are being asked if they are stuck in a stagnating phase of life or a period of inactivity. We’ve maybe experienced this use of the word. But, how about used another way? Have you ever experienced what we could call spiritual doldrums?

If we are honest, likely most of us have at some point. Maybe it was a time, for whatever reason, instead of growing in grace and knowledge we were standing still, maybe even shrinking back. In a real sense, this can happen to any one of us, at any period of our life and for any length of time.

But God has a sort of annual medicine, if you will, to help cure us of a spiritual doldrum.

Each year we take part in observing God’s Holy festivals and, through them, we can see God’s plan for all humanity, including His plan for us individually. Because of this, the Holy Days can serve as wind in our sails, giving us a sense of revitalization, moving us where God wants us to be.

However, if not on guard, it is after these Holy Days each year that we can more easily fall prey to the spiritual doldrums. This lengthy gap between the end of the fall Holy Days until the spring Holy Days is like that eerie, calm water described earlier. If we’re not taking the right precautions, we can feel ourselves drifting aimlessly through stagnant waters, not moving forward and rationing the spiritual food we partook of from the fall feasts until spring. But we don’t want to enter the spring Holy Days empty. Our spiritual storehouse needs to be full in order to fully appreciate and observe all of those days to the fullest.

Seeing that the period without the Holy Day reminders of God’s plan is upon us, let’s look at how we can stay active, how we can avoid falling prey to drifting aimlessly through this spiritual doldrum and move forward in our Christian walks.

Social Connectivity

One of the most obvious statements for us is that when troubled or falling into a rut, our ultimate reliance should be on God, understanding that God helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:26). We should turn to God, not only in our times of distress, but also in our times of abundance. God is our ultimate provider and comforter through any times of distress, as God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

Although we all have different personalities, something that many of us have in common is that we are created to enjoy social connectivity.

Our creator God is wonderful concerning all His commandments, specifically so in the command to remember and keep His Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12; Leviticus 23:3). Created as social creatures, God knew what He was doing when He commanded that we all gather together on the Sabbath day.

After returning from the Feast of Tabernacles, a time of continued gathering day after day, we could fall into a sense of loneliness or aimlessness. However, continuing to assemble every Sabbath day is an opportunity for us to rekindle spirituality with one another. We can use the opportunity of gathering each Sabbath to stir up one another in love and good works. We see the writer of Hebrews mention this in Hebrews 10:24-25. Just as the Feast of Tabernacles can be refreshing and rejuvenating, each Sabbath day can and should be refreshing, allowing us to refocus and get back on course. It’s wonderful how God gives us this day each week to stay headed steadfastly in the right direction.

Open Your Bible Daily

During each of God’s feasts, we get the wonderful opportunity to learn from God’s Word, specifically during the Feast of Tabernacles each day. Once we return home after those daily services, we can have an abundance of notes and memories to dwell on. Something that comes to mind is the example of the Bereans. Reading through the account of those in Berea found in Acts 17:10-11, we find recorded that, when taught, the Bereans “received the word with all readiness.” Hopefully, this is something we’ve done at this last Feast and at each Sabbath service, weekly. However, it isn’t best to only receive the word with readiness. Yes, we should receive sermons with all readiness, but we should be diligent to prove them from God’s Word. If we continue reading, we see the Bereans did just that. Acts 17:11 continues with: “...and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so.” We should take time daily to study and enrich ourselves in God’s Words. Bible studies can be an important way to avoid falling into aimless spiritual doldrums.

Envision the Future

When considering the long season ahead of us, we must continue to keep our minds focused, always looking ahead. We can think on the wonderful passages we read and heard during the fall feasts that picture a wonderful future to come. This future time is one of peace, one of restoration of all things. We must seek out this picture in our minds, constantly dwelling on the better promises to come. Matthew records Jesus Christ’s own words concerning this mindset: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). While we seek, we can find encouragement, finding what we need to be doing in our lives, to enter those promises.

Throughout the seafaring world, since the modern invention of engine propelled ships, the threat of the windless doldrums is almost non-existent. However, the spiritual analogy we can see from them is still something to look out for. At times all too often we can find ourselves in a rut throughout life, especially after the fall feasts, finding ourselves in a spiritually windless state, sailing aimlessly week after week. But it doesn’t have to be so.

We can take solace in the fact that God is a compassionate Father, not willing that anyone perish, but that all should come to repentance.

We must strive to avoid the doldrums, and always be on guard. Take time each day to ask for God’s guidance, fully relying on Him.

Remember God’s Sabbath and strive to keep it holy each week, not just while at services, but the entire Sabbath.

Take time to study God’s Word, looking for His answers to life’s troubles. When overwhelmed at times, remember to think on God’s coming Kingdom, remember the promises that are soon to come. Strive to live God’s way of life, and in doing so sail steadily towards God’s Kingdom, right on past those dreaded spiritual doldrums!

Health-Focused Unleavened Cookbook

Calling all bakers and cooks of all ages. This is a reminder about the unleavened bread cookbook we are putting together with the emphasis on “healthy eating.” Do you have a favorite healthy unleavened bread recipe you would like to submit? We would also appreciate and welcome gluten-free recipes, and any recipes you may have for food allergies or special needs diets.

Please submit your recipes to healthy.cookbook.2019@gmail.com. The deadline will be Jan. 11. We would like to make it available for purchase before the Days of Unleavened Bread.

All proceeds from the sale of the cookbook will go towards the ABC international fund. More details about purchasing and prices will follow in the next few weeks.

Also, anyone who has a good title for our cookbook can submit their idea to the above e-mail. If your title is chosen, you will receive a free cookbook.

Thank you for your support of this very worthy cause.

Any questions can be directed to healthy.cookbook.2019@gmail.com or directly to Kathy de Campos at kathy_decampos@ucg.org.

Kathy de Campos
The Ten Commandments Series

The Third Commandment

by Don Hooser

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11).

Good relationships are built on respect, and God deserves and requires our absolute respect and ardent reverence.

Many people mistakenly think this commandment is merely about spoken and written names, titles and words within a language. In this commandment, God’s “name” primarily represents His identity, office, reputation, authority, personality and character.

“In vain” refers to any worthless or disrespectful way, or way that misrepresents God.

Some Bibles translate this verse as do not “misuse” God’s name. There are many ways that we can and should use God’s name. There are also many people misuse His name.

Many people think what they say is not important, only what they do is important. On the contrary, our words are an important part of our actions. This is verified by the third chapter of James as it speaks about the great power of the tongue for both good and evil.

Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. . .I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:34, 36-37).

Our words must be truthful, meaningful, edifying and pleasing to God.

Why the Stern Warning?

This Commandment includes a unique and stern warning: “the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” We naturally wonder why, since the violation of any one of the Ten Commandments is a serious sin. Part of the answer is that this commandment applies especially to religious people who claim to be following and representing the God of the Bible.

The word for “take” can be more clearly translated as “carry, hold or bear” the name. So who carries the name of God?

Both true Christians and false Christians carry God’s name by claiming to be representatives of God, so God is warning them that they must not represent Him in any wrong way.

God’s judgment of people is based on their level of understanding. The more knowledge of the Bible a person has, the more accountable and culpable he or she is before God (see Luke 12:47-48; John 9:41; Romans 3:20; 7:7; 14:23; James 4:17).

So when a person knowingly misrepresents God, the sinful guilt is great.

Thus God seems to be saying, “You people who claim to represent Me had better not represent Me in any wrong way: If you are going to carry My name, you had better carry it correctly. If you misrepresent Me when you know better, you will surely suffer the consequences.”

“Sacred Names” Fad Perverts This Commandment

The “sacred names” fans insist that the names of God and Jesus Christ should only be expressed in the Hebrew language. This “rule” is an addition to the Bible, a thing God forbids! (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:33; Revelation 22:18-19). The proponents are belittling God as a Being obsessed with languages, spelling and sounds! God does not prefer one language over others. God wants each person to love and worship Him with understanding and sincerity—with all his mind and heart—and that is best accomplished with one’s own language (Mark 12:30).

It’s a wonderful blessing that the Bible is being translated into more and more of the world’s many languages!

Religious Hypocrisy: The Number One Violation

The Bible reveals that God has many names and titles because He has many special attributes, and fulfills many sacred roles. They represent the total reality of His identity, nature, character, characteristics and authority. Disrespect of any of God’s names is disrespect of God.

However, it is significant that the Third Commandment says “name” (singular) rather than “names” (plural). In this Commandment, God’s name stands for God Himself. This shows that God is much more concerned about His overall identity and people’s reverence for Him than which specific names and titles we use to address Him.

“Name” is often synonymous with reputation (see Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1). We must do all we can to glorify God’s name and reputation and not tarnish them.

If I claim to represent God and my conduct does not reflect the holy character of God, I am hurting God’s reputation and giving Him “a bad name.” We should be leading people to God, but this kind of terrible hypocrisy drives them away.

Evil-doers have often justified their actions by claiming they had God’s authority or permission and were acting on God’s behalf. Those actions have included horrible things: persecution, wars, murders, tortures, slavery, etc. We can only imagine how angry God is with wickedness done in His name! And when religious people are known to commit lesser sins, they also cast a bad reflection on God.

In some ways, false Christianity does more harm than other false religions because it gives people false impressions of the Bible. Consider Jesus’ warning: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I [Jesus] am the Christ, and will deceive many’” (Matthew 24:4-5, emphasis added). Jesus was specifically warning about the deception of counterfeit Christianity that interferes with people learning about and embracing true Christianity (see also 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 13-15).

When Bible-professing people are hypocritical, they become “stumbling blocks”—spiritual obstacles instead of helpers (see Matthew 7:15-16, 21-23; Luke 6:46; and Romans 2). Jesus’ most scathing criticisms were against the hypocritical religious leaders (Matthew 15:1-9, 23:1-39; Mark 7:1-23).

Some hypocrisy is especially despicable. One example is religious leaders who are wolves in sheep’s clothing, taking advantage of their offices and power to molest children or seduce women. It seems they must have seared their consciences (1 Timothy 4:2). Another example is that those who “think religion is a way to make money” (1 Timothy 6:5, Beck translation). They talk like a prophet so they can reap a profit.

Hallowed Be Your Name

When Jesus taught His disciples the most important subjects to include in our daily prayers, He said to pray for God’s name to be hallowed—for it to be regarded as holy and to be guarded as holy (Matthew 6:9).

God said, “You shall not profane My holy name” (Leviticus 22:32). To profane means to deface, to treat what is sacred and sublime as something secular and mundane. Tragically, today society surrounds us with profanity of all kinds including the profaning, besmirching and blaspheming of God’s names. With God’s help, we must ever guard our hearts from such sacrilegious influences.

Whenever we mention a name of God, it should always be with respect and reverence. It should never be uttered as cursing, slang, expletive, exclamation, jargon or thoughtless filler words. The next few paragraphs list some of the sinful ways God’s names are uttered. The list includes euphemisms of God’s names. “Euphemism” is derived from Greek words that mean “good speaking.” Most people don’t realize there is anything wrong with these milder and innocent-sounding expressions, but once we understand their connections with God’s names, we should scrupulously avoid using them. Following are the examples:

Connecting “God” with the word “damn” (or using a euphemism of that such as “dad-gummit”). This and saying “go to hell” literally means one is asking God to condemn someone to hell, but most people thinking “hell” is a place of eternal torment—a horrible thing to wish on anyone! Just saying “damn” can imply the same thing. And “darn” and “dang” are euphemisms of damn.

Using the names of God and Jesus Christ as exclamations, expletives and interjections. It’s disgusting how commonplace it is to hear people say “oh, my God!” or to say or write “OMG.” Unless said as part of a prayer, it’s wrong to say “oh, my Lord!” or “oh, Jesus!” or for God’s sake!” or “for Christ’s sake!”

We should also avoid euphemisms for God and Jesus Christ such as gosh, golly, gad, jeez and gee.

Please see page 25
Announcements

Births

Kayla Clementine Miller
Matthew and Jamie Miller are pleased to announce the birth of their third daughter, Kayla Clementine. Kayla was born at home on the first day of summer—June 21. She was 8 lbs. 13 oz., 21 in. long. Older sisters Lily and Charlotte are loving on her already and the whole family is feeling beyond blessed.

Weddings

Derek Riess and Jaclyn Wilson
Keith and Michele Wilson, of Washington, Pennsylvania, are happy to announce that on July 15, 2018, their daughter Jaclyn Wilson was married to Derek Riess, son of Tracy and Lori Riess of Stewartton, Pennsylvania, are happy to announce the ceremony and much of the reception took place in Moundsville, West Virginia, and the wedding ceremony was officiated by the bride’s father.

Due to a storm, the power was out for more than five hours, which spanned the ceremony and much of the reception. Family and friends stepped in to get candles and think of creative ways to play music, which included the DJs pulling candles and think of creative ways to play music, which included the DJs pulling candles and think of creative ways to play music, which included the DJs pulling candles and think of creative ways to play music.

Derek and Jaclyn attend the Cincinnati Community College.

Ben and Wanda Gentry
Ben and Wanda Gentry's 60th wedding anniversary was celebrated by the Bloomington/Canton, Illinois, congregations on the evening of Dec. 17, 2017. Brethren and friends, including son Darrell with his wife Pam, were present to lovingly congratulate them on this wonderful occasion. The special poetry reading and fellowship, along with cake, punch, snacks and drinks were enjoyed by everyone.

The Gentrys are longtime members of the Church, having both been baptized in 1972. They currently reside in Washington, Illinois. The couple is a very special part of the Church family; may they experience God's peace, comfort and growth in Him in the years to come.

Obituaries

Raleigh Collins
Raleigh Collins, age 92 of East Point, Kentucky, was born on March 24, 1925, to the late Shell and Eva Whitaker Collins. He died following an extended illness on Friday, Sept. 8, 2017, at the Pikeville Medical Center. In life his occupation was that of a disabled coal miner. He was preceded in death by his son, seven brothers and sisters, and one nephew. He is survived by two grandchildren, and seven nieces and nephews.

Raleigh was a member of the Pondersburg, Kentucky, congregation, and had been baptized for 55 years. He was an enthusiastic member who was always ready to talk about the Bible. There are many people all around the United States who knew him. Raleigh understood the plan of salvation and is now awaiting the resurrection and Christ's return.

Beverly Duncan
Beverly (Bev) Duncan died at the Jefferson Lodge Memory Care Facility in Dallas, Oregon, on April 26, 2018, at the age of 88. Bev was an only child, born in Jamestown, New York, on April 12, 1930, to parents Robert and Mildred Lane. From New York to Kansas, then on to the Northwest, Bev graduated from Eugene High School. She also lived in the Springfield, Salem, and Stayton, Oregon, areas.

Bev raised her family southwest of Eugene in the country near small, surrounding towns that included Lorane, Crow, Elmira, Veneta and Noti. She put her all into home cooking, canning, gardening and sewing. Family was important to her. Bev worked for legal aid in Eugene, Oregon. She was always happy when things worked out better for others. She was also a realtor in Florence, Oregon.

During Bev’s latter years, she was involved in a grandparents program in the Stayton schools, often coming home with something the students had given her in appreciation for her help. They called her “Grandma Bev.”

Bev was a long-time member of God’s Church. She had the opportunity to help those that were housebound in various ways and was always happy to do so.

Bev was preceded in death by husbands from previous marriages, Robert Chambers and Ed Duncan. She had six children, of which two preceded her in death (son, Robert Gregory Chambers, and daughter, Connie Blanchard). She is survived by daughters, Terri Jacobson, Kim (Jim) Hance, Chris Chambers and Deb (LeRoy) Boldt and eleven grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

Royce Everett Eslinger
Royce Everett Eslinger was born Sept. 24, 1922, the first of five children of Fred and Drotha (Gardiner) Eslinger. He served in the army during World World II with the 103 Cactus Division, whose duty it was to go behind enemy lines to

Anniversaries

Steve and Kris Allen
Steve and Kris Allen celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on Sept. 23, 2018. They have two sons, two granddaughters and one grandson. They celebrated on Sept. 9, with many friends and family members. Steve and Kris attend the Raleigh, North Carolina, congregation. Steve is a semi-retired builder/contractor. Kris works at Wake Technical Community College.

Carl and Mary Carmichael
Carl and Mary Carmichael look forward to celebrating their 66th wedding anniversary on Nov. 22, 2018. They were baptized in Denver, Colorado, in 1969 while living in Wyoming. In 1971, they moved their family to Wisconsin to help build the Feast site in Wisconsin Dells. Upon completion of the site, they relocated to Tyler, Texas, where Carl worked for a consulting engineering company and Mary as a homemaker until their retirement in 1997 and subsequent return to Wyoming. In 2017, the couple again returned to Texas and now live in Weatherford, west of Fort Worth. Carl was ordained an elder and Mary a deaconess in 1978 and the couple have served for 40 years in North Texas and Wyoming.

They currently attend the UCG congregation in Coleman, Texas. The couple have four children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Ben and Wanda Gentry
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The Gentrys are longtime members of the Church, having both been baptized in 1972. They currently reside in Washington, Illinois. The couple is a very special part of the Church family; may they experience God's peace, comfort and growth in Him in the years to come.

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find where the German troops were. It was a very dangerous assignment and he was one of the few of his troop to return home. He received two bronze stars for his service.

Shortly after returning home, he married Evelyn Price. They celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary on May 4 of this year.

Royce and Evelyn began a serious study of their Bible in the early 50s and then started looking for a church that taught what they had learned. They were baptized in August 1954, and were founding members of the Springfield, Missouri congregation when it began in 1958.

On Sept. 15 after three months on hospice care at home, Royce entered his rest on the day of rest with several family members present. God granted him his wish that he not have to go into a nursing home.

Royce is preceded in death by his siblings (Vonne, Edward, Don and Rosalie) as well as three children (Louise, Evelyn and Calvin). He is survived by his wife, Evelyn; children Linda (Anthony) Wasilkoff, Cheri (Jared) Williams, Benjamin Boyd, Charley Hogue, Cristal (Willie) Curtis, Wayne Hogue, Thomas Hogue, Bonnie Hogue, Jeremy (Lynn) Eslinger, Justin (Amanda) Eslinger, Tammy (Dustin) Crouch, and Randy Black; and 19 great-grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A graveside memorial was held on Oct. 14.

**Jerry Hoskin**

Jerry Hoskin, a member of the Vero Beach congregation, died after a two-year battle with cancer. During his illness, he was a tremendous example of faith under a serious health trial.

Jerry was baptized in March 1990 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

He was loved by everyone who came into contact with him. His heart was always toward the betterment of the brethren and fellow human beings. Once, even while in the hospital dealing with his cancer, he desperately wanted to be able to go to a funeral for another member who had died in a tragic accident. This exemplified Jerry.

His sense of humor and his character brought out the best in those he met during his life. He was a true man of God, loved God’s law, and will be greatly missed by his congregation and those who knew him.

Jerry is survived by his wife Carol-Lynne. Jerry had written a letter to God asking for qualities he had hoped for his wife, and Carol-Lynne had written a letter to God asking for the qualities she hoped for in a husband. After two years of trying to get to the same Feast site, the third year God truly blessed both their plans when in 1993 they met at the Feast in St. Petersburg, Florida. They corresponded for two years between Calgary, Alberta, and Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, and were married in 1997. God truly blessed their marriage and they both said they were made for each other.

Jerry was self-employed and owned and operated Complete Detailing for 21 years.

**Glen D. Lewis**

Glen D. Lewis was born Aug. 28, 1932, and died at his home in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, from leukemia on Aug. 22, 2017. He was raised in Bartlesville by his parents, living there most of his life, except for his two years in the U.S. Army where he attained the rank of corporal. Before his service, he graduated in 1950 from Bartlesville College High School, loving the game of baseball and lettering in that sport.

On June 16, 1954, Glen was married to Jacqueline Holcomb in Las Vegas, Nevada. They had met in a skating rink in Riverside, California, the year before.

Glen with Jackie returned to Bartlesville in December 1954 where they started a family of two boys, Mike and Frank, and one girl, Kathy. Glen was employed by Phillips Petroleum Company for 35 years. After retiring from Phillips, Glen joined Jackie in her business, “The Drapery Nook.” They both worked in it for 30 years, making and installing custom drapes and other window treatments in many homes and businesses. He liked to be in his shop, working with his hands, fixing things and improving the way things worked.

Several years before his retirement from Phillips, Glen was listening to country music on the radio during a late-night shift. Once the music stopped, “The World Tomorrow” came on. He began listening, unaware that Jackie was at home listening to the same program. She sent for the correspondence course, and before very long asked to find out where the nearest Church was. To her (and Glen's) surprise, it was only about 50 miles away in Tulsa, but Glen wasn't really interested in attending any church!

But Jackie was, and in 1966 a minister contacted her and invited her to come. Jackie was baptized March 11, 1967. After about three years of trials, Glen decided he would attend too, and he was baptized April 11, 1970. He began serving God's people, and God blessed him greatly for it.

Glen and his wife Jackie loved to travel to different sites in the United States for the Feast of Tabernacles. Glen was very faithful in his promise to God. He missed very few Sabbaths or Holy Days until the last three weeks of his life, and his hope was to see all of the brethren in God's Kingdom when Christ comes again.

**Paul R. Markland**

Paul R. Markland, age 93, of Greenville, Ohio, and formerly of Arcanum passed away at 9:25 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 9, 2018, at the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville. Paul was born Nov. 26, 1924, in Darke County, Ohio, and the son of the late John N. and Clara S. (Grote) Markland.

He was retired from farming and also had been employed at the Chrysler plant in Dayton, Ohio, retiring from there in 1991. He was a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Army and a recipient of three bronze stars.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a granddaughter Denise.

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God expects us to carry out the work He commissioned to His disciples—no matter how difficult it may seem.

The Importance of Our Words

continued from page 19

of God's Kingdom to as many people as we are able.

The message is the same as it has always been for 2,000 years, but many of the tools are different to what was available way back then—in particular, that of video, television and streaming TV.

New tools at our disposal

According to Statista.com the global population of regular Internet users, as of July 2018, is 4.1 billion people. And, 3.3 billion people were social media users. Plus, they note that 3.8 billion people access the Internet regularly using mobile devices!

Around 48 percent of the world's population has an Internet connection today. In 1995, when UCG began, it was less than 1 percent! This is why a large portion of our work at the United Church of God includes video and online streaming TV.

This is a far cry from when many of us first started watching TV in the 60s. This is one of the many reasons why the United Church of God and Beyond Today leverage social media on many channels.

By 2019, half the world’s population will access the Internet regularly. Inexpensive mobile phones and mobile broadband connections are making Internet access available in countries where the Internet had been out of reach for people.

Our commission

Here is one of my favorite scriptures: “Later He [Jesus] appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature [to everyone, or, to all creation]’” (Mark 16:14-15, emphasis added).

Only time will tell how much of this huge goal we in the United Church of God will be able to accomplish in this end-time—before the Two Witnesses begin their work from Jerusalem—but we believe that the seeds we are sowing in the United Church of God, an International Association, will germinate and bear fruit at the appropriate time and as God desires.

We are reaching millions of people every year with various elements of the gospel message. Our UCG.org website received more than 10 million unique visitors last year, and we are currently ranked by Alexa as the 13th most popular religious denomination website in the world. This is a remarkable achievement considering our limited resources. Those with higher rankings than UCG are very large organizations—like catholic.net and jw.org.

Religious confusion removed

There is religious confusion in our world today. Thankfully, Jesus Christ is going to return to reign on this earth and end the confusion. Humanity will have hope, peace, joy and an opportunity to receive eternal life.

In the meantime, God expects us to carry out the work He commissioned to His disciples—no matter how difficult it may seem. And this includes preaching the gospel of His Kingdom to the world as widely as we are able. We give the world hope of a better world to come than what we see in the religious confusion of today.

God’s Church is the means by which He is preparing our world for Christ’s return! It has a job to do! It is through us, His firstfruits, that He is preparing the future leaders and teachers of His Kingdom. He is building a world for tomorrow through His Church today! UN

Never underestimate the importance of your words. God wants our words to build up, to edify, to encourage, not tear down or discourage.

or dispute that cannot be stopped once it starts. It is not limited to one who has ongoing, active involvement in stirring up trouble. Sowing discord could be the result of a single statement.

Sometimes a person deliberately sows discord—that is their intended purpose. Other people may unintentionally be responsible for sowing discord, possibly the result of someone passing by a conversation and overhearing a single statement, but the result is the same—hurt, damage, discord. Whether deliberate or accidental, the person making the statement is now accountable for having sown discord. So we see that we must be careful with every word we speak.

Another quote I heard some years ago that is worth remembering is, “Words are like fire, they can warm your house or burn it to the ground.” Do our words bring warmth to the house of God, or try to burn it down? The adversary will con-

continue to launch fiery darts at individuals and the church as a whole, in an attempt to burn down the house (Ephesians 6:16). Let’s be sure that we are not inadvertently participating in this attack.

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he instructed Timothy to remind the brethren not to strive about words to no profit, and to shun profane and idle babblings because they only lead to more ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:14-16). In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).

A principle reason for us to gather together on the Sabbath and Holy Days, is not to strive or contend over words to no profit, but rather that we “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

Never underestimate the importance of your words. God wants our words to build up, to edify, to encourage, not tear down or discourage. As Solomon wrote: “Pleas- ant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

Announcements

continued from page 23

L. Meyer; daughter-in-law Linda Mark- land; sons-in-law Gary Morris and Bill Meyer; brothers Herbert, Glen and Doyle Markland, and sisters Dorothy Nicholas and Thelma Markland.

Paul is survived by his wife Treva L. (Miller) Markland of Greenville. They were married Nov. 27, 1947. Also children Peg Meyer of California, Barbara L. Morris of Texas and Richard A. Mark- land of London, Ohio; grandchildren Bryan Meyer, Erik Meyer and Jason Morris; three great-grandchildren; sis- ter Phyllis Sowry of St. Marys, Ohio as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Paul was a long time member of the Dayton, Ohio, congregation.
Tax Savings for Those Over Age 70

by Rick Shabi

With the new tax law for 2018, which is officially called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, there is a significant tax planning and savings opportunity for seniors over age 70 ½ that we want to make you aware of.

One of the features of the new law is the significant increase in the standard deduction, which almost “doubles” the amount of the deduction from last year. Beginning this year, the standard deduction increases to $12,000 for individuals, $18,000 for heads of household, and $24,000 for married couples filing jointly and surviving spouses. As a result of this increase, many church members who previously deducted their tithes and offerings on Schedule A will not need to do so this year.

However, if you are age 70½ and are required to take minimum distributions from your IRA (or 401k), there is a tax benefit that will effectively and legally allow you to reduce your income by the amount of tithes and offerings you make to the Church. It is called a “qualified charitable distribution” (QCD) and it works this way:

If the QCD is paid to you, it is included in your income and you pay taxes on it. But, if you elect to have the fiduciary of your IRA or 401k distribute funds directly to the Church, the amount you contribute will not be included in your income, thereby effectively reducing your tax expense. There are other tax advantages, too, including how much of your Social Security income may be taxed.

Additionally, making a QCD directly to the Church for payments of tithes and offerings reduces the required minimum distribution you are required to take. Please note that charitable contributions using this method are limited to $100,000 per year by law.

Here’s a note from a Church member who wrote to us, who uses this method and the effect it has had on his taxable income and tax expense:

“This is what I do: I use a QCD from one of my IRAs (this also applies to 401ks) to send a lump contribution to the Church, which includes first tithes, regular offerings, assistance fund, camp scholarship fund, video studio, and tithe-of-tithe. This is a great replacement for taking a charitable deduction on Schedule A, which likely will no longer be advantageous for most (due to the increased standard deduction). It also is not counted in determining the taxable amount from my Social Security payments, and therefore lowers my overall tax due. I get a double deduction: the QCD is not counted as income, and this lowers the taxable amount of social security. Both of these lower my AGI (adjusted gross income) and my taxes for the year. Not only that, but I get the double (increased) standard deduction starting this year! Wow!"

The process is fairly easy. Ask your IRA or 401k fiduciary or agent about making QCDs directly to the Church and not to you, and they will likely give you a form that you must complete that will ask the amount you wish to contribute and the name and the address of the Church.

This is a great opportunity for those of you to make your contributions and enjoy an additional tax break you may not have thought of previously. If you have any questions about this, feel free to call or e-mail us, or speak to your plan agent.

Victor Kubik Visits Sri Lanka and India

by Victor Kubik

Beverly and I visited Sri Lanka and India from Oct. 2-17 with Senior Pastor David Schreiber and his wife Jolinda. The Colombo, Sri Lanka, congregation is quite vibrant and expressive. On Friday night, Oct. 5, we had a get together with 30 at one of the member’s homes. On the Sabbath, we had services followed by Beyond Today presentations by David Schreiber and myself.

Then we flew a short distance to India where we conducted three more seminars in the eastern state of Andhra Pradesh. About 170 attended these meetings and expressed a great deal of interest in the United Church of God. We visited one of our former ABC students Ezekiel Polinatai in the city of Visakhapatnam. He then traveled with us to the far eastern state of Mizoram nestled between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Here we have been visiting Sabbath-keepers for about ten years. This church, which has three congregations now calls itself the United Church of God. They had prayed for many years to find another church with similar beliefs that they could associate with. With us, they feel a special kinship. They have adopted our Fundamentals of Belief and have translated some of our literature into the Mizo language.

We traveled with them to all three of their congregations and met with their leaders, as well as other Sabbath-keeping groups in the area. This part of India is almost 100% Christian because of British missionaries who visited this area in the 1890’s.

I’d like to share one example of such a planting and germination. In Agra (where a United Church of God congregation is found), more than a decade ago a Hindu person gave George Samuel a copy of a Good News magazine that he had found. The person wasn’t interested in the magazine, but thought that George might be. George found the Good News magazine enlightening and sent for more literature and subsequently a visit. After some time he was baptized, along with his wife, Shobha. Now, they hold weekly church services in their Agra home for about 12-20 people. I had the honor to meet them for the first time and hear their story of faith and stepping out as Christians in this Hindu culture. We are hoping that George can come to Ambassador Bible Institute.

The Third Commandment continued from page 21

It’s good to avoid words that are closely connected with God—such as heaven, holy, and goodness—when they are uttered as flippant expressions. They include “for heaven’s sake!” and “Holy cow!” and “goodness gracious!” and “for goodness sakes!”

God certainly expects His people to abstain from vulgar curse words, “coarse jesting” (dirty jokes) and “filthy language” (Ephesians 4:29; 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8).

We are prohibited from using religious titles that only belong to God, including “Father” (Matthew 23:8-10). Only God deserves to be called Revered or “Reverend” (Psalm 111:9, King James Version). Even uttering “vain repetitions”—babbling God’s name over and over in prayers and preaching—is displeasing to God (Matthew 6:7).

Of course, there are other ways of disrespecting God. When we act disrespectful toward people, we are disrespecting their Creator. When we blame God for the problems we’ve caused, we are wrongly accusing God. We obviously are insulting God if we generally ignore Him except when we ask for favors.

Regarding swearing (uttering an oath), the New Testament makes it clear that we are to never swear (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12). In a court of law, we can say, “I affirm to tell the truth.”

God’s Name Has Authority and Power That Should Be Rightly Used!

Whatever has great power (nuclear energy, for example) can be used for great good or great harm. The names of God have awesome power, but not in a magical or pagan way. Blasphemy, hypocrisy and other misuses of God’s names do great harm, while godly uses of those names can do great good.

For example, we human beings by ourselves do not have the authority or permission to approach or speak to God. But Jesus Christ of course has the authority to approach His Father and He has offered to share that authority with us! We can pray directly to God by coming to Him “in the name of Jesus Christ!” (see John 15:16, 16:23-27)

No matter what we are doing, we should always think of ourselves as representing Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul wrote, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17). That’s an awesome responsibility!

If God has called you to be His son or daughter, you are called to “glorify” Him by being the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). You are called to carry His name and reflect His character with every thought, word and action. Never misuse or misrepresent His name. Instead, carry His name in the many wonderful ways that honor, exalt, magnify and glorify God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Services

Updates from Ministerial and Member Services

On Aug. 21, 2018, the Council of Elders approved the appointment of Mark Welch as the Operation Manager for Ministerial and Member Services. Mr. Welch and his wife, Barbara, will be transferring to the home office in Ohio later this year.

On Aug. 20, Dennis O’Neill was recredentialed by the United Church of God. He serves in the Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, congregation.

On Sept. 1, Filius Jere was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Chosiwe, serve in the Chipata, Zambia, congregation.

On Sept. 8, Victor Hou was ordained into the ministry. He serves in the San Diego, California, congregation.

On Sept. 10, the Feast of Trumpets, Steven Britt and Joshua Creech were ordained into the ministry at a combined service of the Cincinnati area and Dayton congregations. Mr. Britt was transferred in October to become an assistant pastor for the congregations in Columbia, Maryland; Richmond and Northern Virginia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Delaware with his wife, Danielle. Mr. Creech was also transferred in October to become an assistant pastor for the congregations in Nashville, Murfreesboro and Jackson, Tennessee, with his wife, Lizzy.

On Sept. 19, the Day of Atonement, Jim Call was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Darlene, serve in the Portsmouth, Ohio, congregation.

On Sept. 20, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Harold Descoteaux was ordained into the ministry. He and his wife, Sharon, serve in the Montreal, Quebec, Canada, congregation.

On Sept. 27, during the Feast of Tabernacles, Heinz Wilsberg was ordained into the ministry. He serves in the Dormagen, Germany, congregation.

On Sept. 8, 2018, the Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia congregations honored 20 senior brethren at their ninth annual senior dinner. Children from the congregation began the evening by presenting a biblical skit based on Psalm 121. The room was colorfully decorated with paper fans, flowers, maracas and themed tableware, in order to honor this year’s “Mexican Fiesta” theme. Dishes for the meal included Mexican vegetable soup, lemon garlic roasted chicken with rice and a slice of tres leches cake, to finish it off. The beverage of the night was a refreshing cucumber lime agua fresca. Sombreros were worn by local teens, who served the food and drinks to the senior guests. Steve Diggins addressed the guests, speaking to them about some of the benefits of being older, such as having wisdom and skills to solve problems, and how these can benefit the younger members of the congregation. Afterward, some guests commented that “everything was wonderful, the evening was very enjoyable, and they appreciated the service of the younger members of the congregation.”

Rhonda Diggins

Senior Brethren Honored at Annual Dinner

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Rhonda Diggins

Tea Time in Fortuna!

The Eureka, California, congregation of the United Church of God enjoyed the first annual Women’s Tea, Sunday, July 22. The event was organized and hosted by Anita Hamill of Fortuna, California. Anita crafted a colorful floral garden retreat where the ladies could enjoy the tea party. The ladies contributed savory snacks and delicious desserts with some extra special delectables, like the chocolate macarons and chocolate roses created by Elizabeth Flourney and Clara Jane Good. The offer of fine finger foods, favorite teas and feminine fellowship brought 16 women to the garden oasis, which included guests from Redding and Santa Cruz, California, from Arizona and Texas. The weather was perfect and the garden was in full bloom!

While the ladies engaged and enjoyed their tea, the men chatted and fellowshipped over lunch at a meet and greet at a nearby buffet.

Sue Crow

Nashville, Murfreesboro Annual Picnic

The Nashville and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, congregations held their second annual combined church picnic on June 24. The hot day kicked off with games for kids, which included a scavenger hunt and water balloon potato game. The park pavilion was close enough to the playground for the kids to run around all day.

The teens and adults began their bracket style cornhole tournament with about 12 teams. Those who did not wish to play sat on the sidelines to cheer on with excitement. It was an encouraging sight to see members of differing ages pairing up as teams, fostering a true sense of community as they played together.

A wonderful potluck style feast was enjoyed by all, with the fried chicken being provided by local members Jason and Norene Fritts. They also provided industrial sized fans that helped keep the heat at bay as teams, fostering a true sense of community as they played together.

A wonderful potluck style feast was enjoyed by all, with the fried chicken being provided by local members Jason and Norene Fritts. They also provided industrial sized fans that helped keep the heat at bay as everyone relaxed together under the pavilion. The rest of the day’s activities included a water balloon toss, Frisbees, football toss and a water balloon fight that was just as much fun for the adults as the children.

While the cornhole tournament wound down to an exciting end, nothing was more delightful than when the ice cream churner was brought out. The homemade ice cream was a sweet capstone to a wonderful day of fellowship and fun. We are already looking forward to next year’s picnic!

Brittany Hynes

Visit to Sri Lanka and India

continued from page 25

College for the second semester starting in January. We also visited with other members and heard their stories.

Our final stop in India was in Delhi where members George and Shobha San
del came to meet us. They live in Agra and the site of the Feast of Tabernacles. George and Shobha host weekly church services in their home.

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The best week ever!

Once every year we hold camp and many young people from various locations in Zambia attend this event. It’s a time they look forward to being found in the Zone, making new friends and being surrounded with people of similar beliefs.

This year’s camp was held at Verino on the church property, hosting a total number of 98 people, 80 campers and 18 staff from different areas in Zambia. It was a power- and fun-packed camp with a wonderful theme: “God’s Vision for You.” It reminded the young people of their place in this world and the plans that God has for them.

Camp was held Aug. 26-Sept. 2. It was directed by pastor Talama and his wife as well as Pastor Siame and his wife. There were lots of fun and games, and a visit to a walking safari 5.5 kilometers from the campsite. There they saw different kinds of animals and birds.

The activities included arts and crafts, first aid, health and hygiene, baking, choir rehearsal and many sporting activities like speed-a-way, volleyball, swimming, handball and lots more. This year another activity called “The Challenge” was added. This was where each team picked random items from a box and were asked to come up with the best art project using the items they picked. They were then asked to make a budget worth K50 ($5) to purchase anything that they felt could help them with their challenge. The team that made the best art project made a mosaic out of millet, toilet paper and card box. From their K50 they purchased spray paint, glue and needles. This mosaic had this year’s theme. It was amazing to see young people working together, sharing ideas and being creative.

There was also the singing challenge. Random hymns from the hymn book were selected and they were asked to come up with a creative way to present the hymn. It was wonderful to see the campers blend the lyrics of other hymns to the one they picked. They blended different tunes together, harmonized and added beats without losing the original tune and lyrics of the hymn they picked. This year’s camp was extra special in that there was a boy—James, 15 years old—who is deaf and doesn’t speak. He was brought into the church by member, Mr. Kaputula. He attends church in Solwezi every Sabbath and is very dedicated. Despite his limitations, this boy is filled with a lot of zeal and determination in learning God’s truths.

It was heartwarming to see other young people accommodate him in every activity. According to him, there was no dull moment. He even attempted to teach his fellow campers sign language for easier communication. Most conversation with him was on paper.

Everyone was eager to help him. They shared their Christian living notes with him so that he wasn’t left behind. Everything they heard, they wrote down for him. By the end of camp, he emerged as the best sportsman. Indeed how good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell safely together in sweet harmony. This is what it feels like to be in the zone. A place of love, unity and togetherness. A place where one is free to be themselves and enjoy the company of fellow believers.

On the Sabbath, brethren from the Lusaka congregation graced us with their presence. We had a beautiful Sabbath with them. We even witnessed an ordination of one of the deacons to minister.

To conclude, we would like to send our sincere gratitude to all who made this camp possible. We have a beautiful Sabbath with them. We even witnessed an ordination of one of the deacons to minister.

To conclude, we would like to send our sincere gratitude to all who made this camp possible. Thanks to LifeNets for providing funds to purchase a projector and screen that was used at camp. And also for maintenance of the sewer system and water pumps.

Mukumbuta Nawa Talama

Members of the Lagos congregation joined the campers and staff at the campsite for Sabbath services and the campers played special music they learned during camp. Camp activities were concluded that night with the banquet and a Bible bowl. As early as 5 a.m. Sunday morning, some of the campers were heading back home some nine hours away.

We all thank the United Church of God and the Almighty Father for having made camp possible and for keeping everyone safe.

Oludare Akinbo

UYC 2018 Reports

Agaja Beach, Ojo, Lagos

Nigeria—Aug. 19-26

The best week ever!

Once every year we hold camp and many young people from various locations in Zambia attend this event. It’s a time they look forward to being found in the Zone, making new friends and being surrounded with people of similar beliefs.

This year’s camp was held at Verino on the church property, hosting a total number of 98 people, 50 campers and 19 staff, including two Americans and one Ghanaian who took the half-hour trip in fiberglass powered boats from the pier in Ojo Local government of Lagos State across a network of lakes to get to camp. Walking from the riverside bank over the sand to the idyllic ocean lapped stretch of land, one truly feels the Zone beginning to take form! All troubles and worries flee, and a feeling of peace and tranquility permeates the body. For a city dweller living emboiled in the busy city of Lagos, being at camp was a big relief, and the exhalation of all the stresses of modern life is indescribable.

Walking from the campsite. There they saw different kinds of animals and birds. They were lots of fun and games, and a visit to a walking safari surrounded with people of similar beliefs.

Despite several days of heavy rains that prevented our usual bonfire night (and a few leaking tents), the spirit of oneness and unity prevalent at camp meant everyone was able to bond, to feel like they were amongst family.

The activities at camp were lively and filled with zest, with the campers chanting heartily and happily as they went to each activity. Activities included Christian living, archery, volleyball, swimming, team challenge, rope bridge, kickball, origami class, paracord craft, tapestry, music and an American Sign Language class.

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The camp theme was “God’s Vision for You,” with various sub-themes for each day. Camp activities started each day with breakfast at 7:30 a.m., then a 15 minute compass check to align campers’ minds and introduce the sub theme for the day. Campers were taught various aspects of God’s vision for them, how they could live their story now, living rightly at all times irrespective of where they are, how they have been called and other biblical lessons.

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What’s New In MEDIA?

Television Airing Schedule

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<td>Hard Questions: Didn’t Jesus Say Not to Judge?</td>
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<td>Jesus Christ: The Real Story</td>
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<td>Which Bible Translation Should I use?</td>
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<td>Steve Myers</td>
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov. 9-12: Young Adult Enrichment Weekend, Turner, Oregon
Nov. 30-Dec. 2: Women’s Enrichment Weekend, Dayton, Ohio
Dec. 3-6: Council of Elders Meeting, Cincinnati, Ohio
Dec. 9-11: Regional Leadership Workshop, Temecula, California
Dec. 20-24: Winter Family Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio
Dec. 20-24: Northeast Winter Family Weekend, Oregon
Dec. 27-Jan. 2: Winter Camp, Wisconsin

JOB OPENING

Director of Stewardship and Development

The United Church of God has announced an opening for Director of Stewardship and Development.

Responsible for creating and implementing a donor-relations and stewardship program to enhance the Church’s revenue stream in accordance with the Mission and Vision Statements and overall goals of the organization. Instrumental in forming a Capital Projects Committee responsible for benchmarking capital structure.

Essential Duties and responsibilities include the following listed below. Other duties may be assigned.

**Fundraising**

- Cultivate and manage a branded Planned Giving Program.
- Familiar with legal and tax implications especially as it relates to estate planning, tax law, wills, trusts, etc.
- Use market analysis to develop fundraising strategies.
- Develop, implement and lead broad-based strategies and fundraising plans that include: capital campaigns and gifts, corporate giving, endowment and engagement programs.
- Design, implement and coordinate interactions with and recognition of donors at all levels.
- Ensure that appropriate data is collected and tracked.

**Marketing and Outreach**

- Collaborate with the management team, giving input regarding fulfilling the Church’s Mission.
- Play a key role in the Church’s public relations strategies.
- Lead marketing efforts with support of the management team using website, newsletters, local and Social Media.
- Increase visibility through communications, branding, proposals, letters and Social Media.

**Strategic Planning and Implementation**

- Recognize when funding would enhance the mission.
- Benchmark the Church’s capital structure and make recommendation to move towards that structure.

**Education and/or Experience**

- Bachelor’s degree (B.A.) in business or non-profit management. Master’s Degree preferred. Minimum of two years’ experience in non-profit development or equivalent combination of education and experience. Proven experience in essential development skills to include annual fundraising, direct mail, major gifts, face-to-face asks, endowment programs, federal and foundation research and grant writing and management. Minimum of one year experience working with boards and volunteer committees.
- Expert use of Social Media tools for both marketing and fundraising purposes.
- Experience preparing budgets, analyzing financial reports, projecting revenues and expenses, and reviewing grant reports.
- Knowledge of endowment building and real estate asset strategies.
- Experience with non-profit financial models and experience managing the dual non-profit priorities of mission and money.
- Potential employees must be baptized members (in good standing) of the United Church of God. Applicants must be biblically literate and possess a thorough working knowledge of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the United Church of God. This position requires the candidate to work at the Church’s Cincinnati office.

For more information about the position, please contact human_resources@ucg.org.