

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Home Office Update November 11, 2004

Dear Brethren,

Norma and I are currently on the second half of a trip that is taking us to Texas and California. This past Sabbath, we had the opportunity to attend the 50th anniversary of the San Antonio, Texas, congregation. What a great event that was, and we enjoyed the fellowship with brethren and old friends very much. We are now in California where we have the chance to visit a few days with our son Ted and a new grandchild we had not yet seen. On this coming weekend, we are looking forward to presenting an ABC Mini-Sampler in Sacramento, California, in conjunction with Dr. Ralph Levy, and visiting with dozens of members and families from this part of California.

In the United States, we have had two significant national events within the span of about nine days. Last week we had national elections, including for the president, senators, representatives, governors and other officials. Today is Veterans' Day, when the country remembers and honors those who have served the nation militarily. Other countries have similar occasions, perhaps at different times throughout the year.

When these events occur, a common question that arises is this: How should we as Christians respond to, participate in, regard, etc., such national observances? How would God want us to conduct ourselves? There are several biblical passages that provide principles for us in this regard.

First, we should give thanks to God for all of the blessings we enjoy—which for many of us includes living in countries that are at peace and prospering (although I realize not all of our brethren live in such areas). This includes appreciation and prayers for our leaders. The passage in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 is clear in this regard: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” We are to obey governments as long as they are not in conflict with God’s laws (Romans 13:1-3) and give honor to whom it is due (Romans 13:7).

Notice, though, the reason *why* Paul gives this instruction to Timothy. It is in order that we may have peace and the opportunity to do the work that God has given us to do. That work is to represent God, and promote the message and goals of the Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 5:13-16). That purpose transcends the governments and politics of man anywhere on earth. Even though their authority is given by God, it is still not God’s government.

The message of the gospel focuses on the eternal reign of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and the purpose that He has for *all* men—to be a part of His family. The gospel does not concern itself with the comings and goings of various leaders, governments or politicians. As Christians, our conduct and speech also should have the focus of the Kingdom of God, and the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. It is through His “reign” in our lives and on the earth that all humans have real hope of a better tomorrow.

I hope you enjoy the reports in this update about the various efforts, projects and accomplishments that are taking place, as we strive to fulfill the mission God has given the Church. Your continued prayers are always needed and appreciated.

Roy Holladay

ANNOUNCEMENT: Winter Camp in Wisconsin

(Pastors—please announce verbally at Sabbath services, if applicable.)

Attention youth! Winter Camp is just around the corner, December 22-26, and applications are still being accepted. Experience four days of exciting activities, make great friends and participate in the positive, inspiring atmosphere of a United Youth Camp. The deadline for camper applications has been extended. Obtain an application from your pastor or visit www.wintercamp.org.

Steve Nutzman

ANNOUNCEMENT: Winter Family Weekend Update -- Young Adult Dinner Dance

The UCG Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky presents "Come Dance With Me", a glamorous dinner dance for the young adults on Saturday, December 25, 2004. Advanced reservations are required to be made no later than December 10, 2004. Send in your registrations RIGHT AWAY! For more information check out the "Come Dance With Me" flyer at www.ucg.org/familyweekend.

Also be sure to view the Winter Family Weekend webpage (www.ucg.org/familyweekend) for continual updates on activities.

Michelle de Campos

Ambassador Bible Center

The acceptances for the class of 2005 stand at 35. We have several more applications in the admissions process and expect that we will receive several more applications before the deadline of December 20. Meanwhile we are busily preparing for next year with updates to our course plans and schedules. Plans for orientation and other ABC activities are being considered.

We have two more ABC Mini-Samplers to conclude this year's schedule. President Roy Holladay and Dr. Ralph Levy will be in the Sacramento, California, area over this weekend while Dr. Don Ward and I will be in Salisbury, North Carolina. Both areas anticipate very good turnouts for the exciting weekend of biblical studies. Both areas have worked hard to prepare for the event, and we appreciate Clyde Kilough's and David Mills' efforts along with their congregations.

I would also like to put in a plug for any former Ambassador College, Ambassador University or Ambassador Bible Center alumni to plan to attend the second All-Ambassador Reunion in Louisville, Kentucky, during the Winter Family Weekend. The reunion is currently planned for Thursday evening at the Clarion Hotel. There will be hors d'oeuvres and other refreshments so that we may provide an atmosphere for fellowship and renewing old friendships. We look forward to seeing you there. More details will be posted in the near future.

We will be considering plans for next year's Mini-Samplers, so if any areas are interested in having an ABC Mini-Sampler, please request one by sending me an e-mail. We appreciate your prayers for successful Mini-Samplers this weekend and for the preparations for the class of 2005.

Gary Antion

Calendar of Upcoming Events for *United News*

Recently a reader suggested that we announce the dates of trips and events in advance so members can be aware of them and pray about them. We would like to start doing this in *United News*, but need your help.

Pastors: If you and/or your congregations are involved in planning regional church activities, international and other special ministerial trips, camps, meetings (such as national council, committee, task force, etc.)

or other upcoming events, could you please send the dates and information to mike_bennett@ucg.org? Please send any information for December and for next year by November 22. (And be sure to update us through the coming year.) Thanks—we can't do it without your help!

Mike Bennett

Editorial

This year we set another record with the number of booklets printed and reprinted—a total of 660,000. This number could still go higher with another month and a half remaining in the year. By far the most popular booklet was *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, with 110,000 copies printed. We exhausted our initial 80,000 print run from March and ordered another 30,000 copies this month. Of our 31 booklet titles, we reprinted two thirds of them (20) this year. Our previous high for number of booklets printed was in 2002, when we printed or reprinted 640,000. We have now printed 100,000 or more copies of 21 of our 31 booklets.

We appreciate the faithfulness and generosity of the members and supporters of United that make these efforts possible.

Scott Ashley

Good News Television

October was a record-breaking month for the *Good News* public access television program. That month, 184 phone calls were received, breaking the old mark of 181 set last April. Another record was broken, which was the number of calls received in a 24-hour period. This occurred on October 24 when 54 calls were received. Sixty-six stations now carry the program in 21 states. The stations in Brooklyn, New York, and Chicago, Illinois, produce the largest number of calls, although middle-size markets such as San Antonio, Texas, and Tucson, Arizona, draw a good amount of response as well.

Both the *Good News* and *Tomorrow* television programs continue to be good avenues for preaching the gospel on a weekly basis in dozens of cities across the United States. Both programs are receiving good responses in most markets. If you would like to sponsor one or both of these programs in your community, please contact Steve Nutzman or Howard Davis. Please continue to pray for the continued success of these programs.

Peter Eddington/Steve Nutzman

Personal Correspondence

Even with the shortened month due to the Feast, we had a full month of activity in October with 73 letters, along with 81 e-mails handled by the Internet team of pastors. Additionally, I had an interesting telephone exchange with a federal prison chaplain. We wrote him the standard letter that asks the prison to allow an inmate to observe God's food laws. He e-mailed and called me several times with a never-ending string of questions about our doctrine. We finally got to the crux of his "questions," when he told me, "Frankly, I have real difficulty trying to help anyone keep laws from the Old Testament, when Romans 14 makes it plain that..." I cut in to ask, "And, isn't your task that of helping inmates to be able to observe *their* faiths, rather than to try to convince them to think as you do?" He replied that it was, and I quickly responded, "We appreciate your help in that way with this inmate very much, Chaplain."

Insofar as the letters, it seems that we had more that are unusual this time. One new reader wrote a critical letter, asking why we think that President Bush is a good Christian and president, when he is a Mason. We took the opportunity to explain that we are not political and why—and we sent him our form on Masons.

Three wrote to find out if animals go to heaven. An inmate asked if we could arrange for him to become a *Baptist* minister. Another inmate who says he was a professional boxer wanted our help in creating an outreach program to keep young people off drugs—certainly a noble cause, but beyond the parameters of our work. An elderly reader says she immediately recognized the theology in our publications as the same that her late grandfather used to preach in the 1940s, and she assumed he must have been a part of the Church of God. Explaining that she didn't know him well, she asked if we could provide her with any information about him! And a man who says he feels strongly inclined to practice Wicca asked if we could explain why that is so.

Many also asked for counsel in truly difficult situations. A mother grieves over her grown daughters, who are seriously messing up their lives, and the mother wants to know how to help “rescue” them. A middle-aged woman, who suffered terrible abuse at the hands of her mother and then her husband, assumes that God caused it all; she asks why He is testing her and what He wants of her. A destitute, suicidal young adult in Nigeria wrote us about his wretched situation, reaching out for encouragement.

Last, we received a request from an inmate in Oklahoma for a pastor to visit not only him, but also the 25 to 40 others who are meeting together on every Holy Day to keep the festivals. Initially, he seems to have good spiritual understanding, but he has only begun to write to us recently. Time will tell if God is calling him and others in his prison. We encouraged him to tell them that each should contact us individually about his interests, questions and literature requests.

Cecil Maranville

Web Visits Surpass Quarter of a Million

In October, our Web site www.ucg.org broke the 250,000 mark once again for the number of visitors who browsed the Web site. Over 283,000 visitors accessed the site, topping the previous record of 278,000 in September. We have seen an increase in visitors who are responding positively to our online ads through Overture.com offering various booklets. Our most popular ads have been for the booklets, *What Happens After Death?* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, followed by *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. We estimate for the month of November that we should come close to breaking the 300,000-visitor mark.

Aaron Booth