

# United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough  
Chairman

Roy Holladay  
President

## Home Office Update March 17, 2005

Dear Brethren,

We in the United Church of God are shocked beyond words at the events encompassing the tragic and senseless slaughter at a Living Church of God Sabbath service in Wisconsin this past Saturday. Words cannot even begin to convey the sorrow and grief we share with those affected. Those of us with a Church of God tradition have always strongly taught and preached the Ten Commandments, which, as we all know, include the command "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). Violence and aggression have no place in any of our collective teachings and traditions.

We do not know what caused the gunman to commit this act. Whatever his state of mind at the time, the outcome was horrific and it will profoundly impact us all. Our main concern now is for the survivors and families affected by this irrational and heartrending act. We in the United Church of God call upon all who fear and worship God to collectively and earnestly pray for the healing and comfort of the grieving. Families have lost their father, their mother, their sister and their brother. Their loss is our loss. In the face of such a tragedy, one's mere words seem very inadequate, but the combined support of many helps ease the suffering. As we read in 1 Corinthians 12, we grieve, ache and sorrow with those who are suffering, coming before God's throne of grace to find comfort for them and all of us.

As I am sure you know, there are family ties extending throughout the Living Church of God and United Church of God. Some United members lost family in this senseless act. One teenage son of a United member was attending the Living congregation on that day, and was also hit in the shooting. Fortunately, he is expected to recover.

Locally and nationally, the United Church of God has extended offers of assistance to those affected and to the Living Church of God. Our pastor in Milwaukee, Mike Hanisko, has been very active in providing comfort and help to families and friends affected by the shooting. Our members in that area are also giving their caring support. I have also called the United families involved in this tragedy to offer our empathy and any assistance that we could provide. We also sent messages to the leadership of the Living Church of God to express our profound sadness about this event, and that we stand ready to help in any way we can. Brethren and ministers alike conveyed their heartfelt appreciation for United's care in this regard. I know some of our other congregations are also extending a hand of caring friendship to Living congregations nearby.

We know that the day is coming soon when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Sadly, as the events in Wisconsin last Sabbath confirm, that day is not yet here. God speed that day, and may God strengthen us all with His love and mercy.

As we move forward in our mission to take care of our brethren and preach the gospel message, please see the encouraging reports included in this Home Office Update.

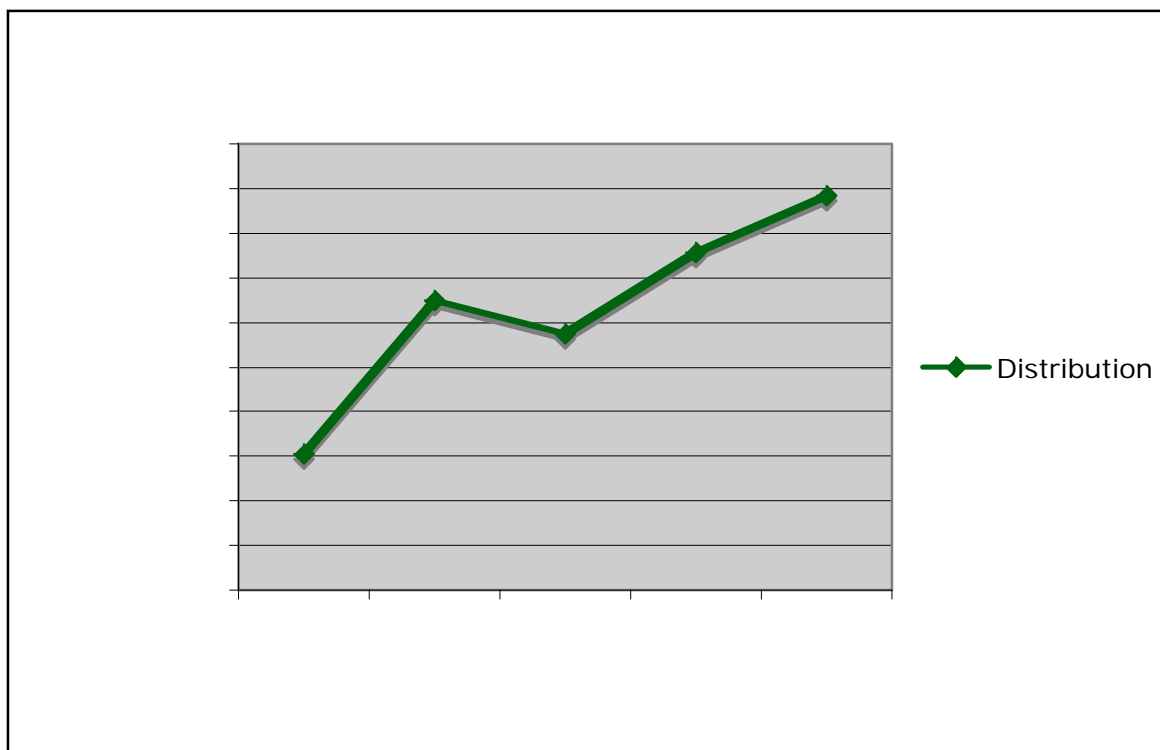
*Roy Holladay*

### **New GN Print Advertising Milestone Reached**

The United Church of God has reached a new *Good News* print advertising milestone. Our 2004-2005 U.S. print promotion impressions (households reached with advertising cards and brochures and "take one"

literature picked up) has reached 8.8 million! This is 1,276,500 impressions higher than last year’s record-breaking level. Here are the figures for the past five fiscal years:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>GN Print Advertising Distribution</u>
2000-2001	3,045,252
2001-2002	6,493,170
2002-2003	5,750,000
2003-2004	7,563,100
2004-2005	8,839,600



Peter Eddington

### **Member Distribution of GN Brochures Reaching Thousands**

In December of 2004, four new *Good News* “take one” subscription brochures were made available for member distribution. Since then, 48,958 brochures and 948 displays have been ordered and are being placed in stores and other locations by our brethren. Currently, 235 U.S. members, including 143 new participants, are active in this distribution effort.

We would like to encourage *many more brethren* to get involved. Members who occasionally visit stores, hairdressers, senior centers, restaurants, libraries or other locations within their neighborhoods or communities, may find these locations to be excellent distribution sites for brochure displays. *Even if only a single display* is placed and maintained, it would be a valuable contribution. If just a handful of individuals are reached with the message of the true gospel, it would be considered a successful endeavor. A member from New Jersey wrote the following:

“Got the new brochures today. After lunch I called my doctor’s office and asked if I could place a display and they said OK. I placed it in the waiting room and then went to the nursing home, which is right next door to my apartment building. So now there’s one right at the main reception desk! Now, on to my local pharmacy!”

U.S. brethren are welcome to order a supply of brochures and displays by contacting John LaBissoniere at 198 McDeerman Road, Jacksboro, TN 37757 or by toll-free telephone at (888) 369-9940 or e-mail at john\_labissoniere@ucg.org. Special thanks go to those who are currently active in the program. Their work, service and enthusiasm are very encouraging and sincerely appreciated.

*John LaBissoniere*

### **Prayers Requested for Print Advertising Efforts**

On Sunday, March 20, 2005, *Good News* subscription brochures will be distributed in “Smart Source” coupon supplements in 750,000 Sunday newspapers in cities and towns throughout the United States. Smart Source is the most widely distributed part of the Sunday newspaper, with a weekly circulation of over 68 million.

To capitalize on interest in the death and resurrection of Christ during the “Easter” season, 500,000 newspapers will receive our *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* bifold subscription brochures. An additional 250,000 newspapers will receive our *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* brochures. This literature offers potential readers enlightening booklets by the same titles and a subscription to *The Good News*.

Also, 560,000 subscription brochures are currently being distributed on *Good Neighbor* “take-one” displays in 4,000 major supermarkets and discount stores all across the United States. In addition, 260,000 “take one” brochures are currently being used by members of the Church in Canada, the Philippines and in many Caribbean nations to help generate new *Good News* subscribers.

Your diligent prayers for the success of all these important advertising efforts would be much appreciated.

*Peter Eddington/John LaBissoniere*

### **Ambassador Bible Center**

As we near Passover time, the first semester of Ambassador Bible Center classes is nearly complete. Thus far we have had two of the module instructors—Richard Thompson and Melvin Rhodes—and currently Jim Franks is presenting his module of Doctrines I. The students are doing quite well with the intensity of the classes and have managed to do extracurricular activities such as sponsor a lunch for newly arriving students, host a Super Bowl party, have a movie night and attend three speech club sessions.

The student body officers and committee heads are working hard to plan and sponsor activities for ABC. A helping hand at a fund-raiser run for heart research is scheduled for this Sunday. We have helped out in the past two years and so we will be handing out water and encouraging the hundreds of participants who have volunteered to raise money for the Heart Foundation. In addition, dozens of cards have been prepared, signed and sent to many brethren in need of encouragement.

It is not too early for those interested in attending the 2006 program to send in their applications. We have a few in our files, but encourage those interested to apply to make sure they have a place in the Biblical Studies Program for 2005.

We have added quite a few volumes to our library and are cataloging and organizing the library so that volumes may be found easily.

We appreciate your enthusiasm and encouragement for the ABC program.

*Gary E. Antion*

### **Editorial**

Our publishing area has been really busy the first few months of this year. In the last few weeks we've sent to the printer the March-April *Good News*, the April-June *Vertical Thought*, 10 *Bible Study Course* lesson

reprints and four booklet reprints. Although the year is less than a fourth over, we've already ordered reprints of over 90,000 *Bible Study Course* lessons and almost a quarter of a million booklets in response to high demand for our publications.

To date we have printed over 3 1/2 million booklets! Our members might be interested in knowing which are the most popular. Our top 10, in order, are:

1. *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* (191,000 copies)
2. *What Is Your Destiny?* (165,000 copies)
3. *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (160,000)
4. *Making Life Work* (144,000)
5. *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* (140,000)
6. *Is the Bible True?* (140,000)
7. *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* (134,000)
8. *God's Holy Day Plan* (130,000)
9. *The Ten Commandments* (130,000)
10. *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (125,000)

We are also close to sending to the printer our second Swedish booklet, *Vägen Till Evigt Liv* (that's Swedish for *The Road to Eternal Life* for all you non-Swedish speakers!).

We appreciate the faithfulness and generosity of our members and coworkers, which makes these efforts possible.

Scott Ashley

### **Personal Correspondence**

We ended February with 79 personal correspondence letters (which includes a couple of e-mails). Another 96 were handled by the Internet personal correspondence team.

As usual, we had some unusual ones and some important ones. One fellow is getting the message; he wrote a passionate letter asking if people are using the "Christian" label fraudulently, since they aren't living the way Christ did. A male inmate asks if he could correspond with a female minister. Another inmate applied for ordination and a job in the ministry of the UCG.

A person baptized (in a Protestant church) two years ago hasn't yet spoken in tongues and he is growing concerned about why; he asks if people who tell him he should be speaking in tongues are speaking the truth! A Muslim man asked for the address of the Muslim woman we featured in the last *GN*. A lady asked what we thought God's "happiness quotient is." That's a different one! But she is thinking that He is saddened by the sins of mankind. Someone asked why we didn't explain in *The Church Jesus Built* why churches decided to have two meetings on Sundays and one on Wednesdays! A reader asks us to have our researchers count the number of times the Bible says that we should keep God's commandments.

A stubborn and unreasonable chaplain still refuses to allow an inmate to have time off for the Holy Days. Four questions came in on the days of creation, including the length of the days and the difference between the first and the fourth days. A young reader from Africa asked why he should be getting an education, since our purpose is to serve God. We explained that getting an education helps us to live in this world where God has called us to be lights. We had several questions on the Sabbath. One subscriber asked if the Sabbath and Holy Days were the same days for everyone or if each person kept them at different times. Another, who is a live-in caregiver, asked advice on how to keep the Sabbath.

A reader recognized a familiar theme and asked if we were the producers of the old *World Tomorrow* television program. Another asked why we changed our name from the WCG. Another wrote that she learned more from *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* than from her history classes in school and from all of her years of church going. A subscriber asked for prayer as he struggles with a 20-year addiction to

pornography. An inmate anxious for baptism asked what will happen to him if he dies before this can be done. A subscriber asked for our help, fearing that the fact she cannot stop smoking means that she has committed the unpardonable sin.

*Cecil Maranville*

### **UCG Singles Web Site**

The United Church of God Singles Web site moved to a new server a couple of months ago to improve reliability and add more capability to the site—such as allowing registered users to post a biography, a short list of interests and a photo. The Web site is getting considerable use! Last month (February 2005) we had 1,841 visits from 1,395 unique visitors. That's an average of 65 visits per day and 8,965 pages were viewed—so each visitor viewed a half-dozen pages on the site. The most popular page to view is the E-list, which allows visitors to look at others' biographies and photos and to send e-mail messages to other registered users. We currently have 1,113 registered users and 638 names on the E-list.

Regarding the E-list, over 2,580 e-mails have been sent from the list since the site started two years ago—indicating it is doing its intended job of allowing singles to contact each other. Since we added the capability to include bios, photos, etc., it is interesting to note that the profile page has become the second most popular page as people update their profiles. Additionally, many photos have been viewed, so it appears it was a good move to add those.

We would like to encourage singles to send in information about events you think other singles would be interested in attending—whether young singles (up to 30 something) or older singles. We post events on two bulletin boards hosted on the site. Send materials to [singles@ucg.org](mailto:singles@ucg.org).

*Ken Treybig, UCG Singles Webmaster*