

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Home Office Update June 23, 2005

Dear Brethren,

This will probably be my last opportunity to write to you in my current capacity as president, and perhaps it is right and fitting that it is in the “Home Office Update.” It has been a privilege to serve with the hard-working and dedicated staff at the home office during these past three years, and we will miss the daily interaction with people we now consider dear friends. We look forward to many enjoyable reunions at Feast sites and other events during the upcoming months and years.

Things are progressing well with the transition in the office of president, and we know the home office employees will give Clyde and Dee Kilough their full support and a warm welcome to Cincinnati. Mr. Kilough will assume his new responsibilities on July 1. He is scheduled to arrive in this area in late June or early July, which will allow us to discuss some important projects and issues prior to our move. We look forward to a positive and smooth transition.

God has also blessed Norma and me in our move to the Cleveland, Tennessee area. We have found a delightful home, and look forward to settling in it. Also, thanks to the hard work of a UCG member—who is a real-estate agent in this area—we have a signed contract to sell our house here. God has provided richly for us, and we look forward to continuing to serve the brethren in an active way in our new area. We thank everyone for their prayers on our behalf, and ask that you pray for God to bless the Kiloughs in their move and new duties.

Meanwhile, the work of the Church continues forward and there is plenty to report. First of all, we are very excited to announce the launch of a new e-mail service titled “This Is the Way.” We have been working on this project for months, and the first messages went out this week. These e-mails contain brief messages, based on biblical principles, that will hopefully inspire, encourage and motivate people to remember God and study His Word more deeply. We have a full announcement about this immediately following my letter, and you can sign up at www.thisistheway.org.

The first United Youth Camp of the season—Camp Pinecrest in Missouri—starts today, and I know the young people and staff would appreciate our prayers for safety, good weather and a great experience. Please look for the reports in *United News* later this summer about all of the summer camps.

We have two reports concerning the Feast of Tabernacles in this update, including the recent trip Peter Eddington and Clay Thornton took to southern Africa to record footage for the Feast video. We also have a new Feast site in Sri Lanka that promises to be exciting. Also included are updates about *Good News* marketing efforts to a younger audience, recent letters, a new booklet, our writing class, an announcement about the Winter Family Weekend, and a report about the new media center being constructed.

Roy Holladay

ANNOUNCEMENT: “This Is the Way” E-mail List

The United Church of God invites you to subscribe to the brand-new “This Is the Way” e-mail list. You will receive short, biblically based e-mail messages that will help you deal with events in your daily life, including the search for meaning in life and subjects of current interest and value. You will begin receiving these thought-provoking messages three times a week. You may unsubscribe at any time. If you feel friends or family members might benefit from “This Is the Way” messages, then please forward them

a sample message so they can sign up. Subscribe today at www.thisistheway.org and see some of the past messages that have been sent to subscribers.

Aaron Booth

Editorial

Things are very hectic in our editorial area right now. We just sent to the printer the July-August issue of *The Good News*. The cover theme for this issue is “Marital Happiness: The Choice Is Up to You!”

To go along with the cover theme in this issue, we are announcing and offering a new booklet titled *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. This new booklet will be a 32-page magazine-format color booklet. Members do not need to request it; a copy will be sent automatically to everyone on our member mailing list in late July or early August.

The initial print run for this booklet will be 100,000. In addition to offering it in *The Good News*, we also will be offering it to subscribers in a letter. We expect it to be very popular with our readers, as we continually get many requests for material about marriage from those on our mailing list.

In addition to covering marriage, the booklet will also cover basic principles of right parenting. The whole approach of the booklet is to show the spiritual dimension and foundation of marriage and parenting revealed in the Bible.

The booklet was written by David Treybig, pastor of the Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida, congregations, who has written many articles on those subjects for our publications.

Again, a reminder: Members do *not* need to request a copy of the booklet; one will be mailed to you in late July or early August when it is printed.

We thank all of you for your generosity. These efforts would not be possible without you.

Scott Ashley

Feast of Tabernacles Sermon Video: Plans for 2005

Clay Thornton and Peter Eddington returned June 8 from a 10-day trip to South Africa and Malawi. The reason for the journey was to record material for the 2005 Feast sermon video to be titled, “The Next Decade and Beyond.”

You may recall that last year a portion of the special Feast sermon message focused on our brethren in the Philippines and portions of Southeast Asia. The year before we focused on the Mexican brethren. This year it will include parts of southern Africa.

Two cities were visited in South Africa: Johannesburg and Durban. In Malawi, Blantyre and Lilongwe were on the itinerary, and combined services were held in the southern city of Blantyre. The time spent with all the brethren visited was thoroughly enjoyed, and they were extremely warm and hospitable! During services on June 4, Gladstone Chonde, from Lilongwe, was ordained an elder by Bill Jahns who pastors Johannesburg and Malawi.

Malawi is one of the poorest nations on earth—some say the poorest. However, despite their poor economic situation and simple mud brick homes, they are some of the happiest people one could meet. Also on the itinerary was a visit to two medical clinics in Malawi that are partially funded by LifeNets donors in the United States. These facilities have been a tremendous help to our brethren and the local communities.

The visit was very profitable, with video footage gathered of interviews with brethren from all four cities—plus some colorful footage of the South African and Malawian countryside, animals, people and

culture. Video was gathered of the largest township in Blantyre. In this township most homes have no electricity, and none have running water or sewer services. Roads are impassable by vehicle in much of the township, and so a visit to a member's home was undertaken on foot. Some of the footage gathered can be seen online in the June 13 Compass Check at www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm.

South Africa is the major economy on the continent that helps to keep Africa afloat financially and technologically. The South African brethren are warm and friendly, and the visit with them was thoroughly enjoyed. Johannesburg is a bustling metropolis, and Durban is a beautiful seaside city. The main drawback with the large South African cities is the level of crime. Homes are heavily barricaded with fences and alarms to protect the occupants.

In addition, the important Feast of Tabernacles sermon message was delivered by pastor Bill Jahns in Blantyre at services on June 4. We believe this will help make our 2005 Feast sermon video very interesting to our brethren around the globe. In addition to the material we have gathered so far, incoming Church president Clyde Kilough will give an update on the work of the Church as we plan for the next decade and beyond.

It's always encouraging to visit brethren from other parts of the world. One thing that we always notice is the common bond that we in God's Church have with one another through the Holy Spirit—no matter where we live. We immediately developed a connection and spiritual kinship while meeting the brethren in these two countries. We trust that you will really appreciate this year's Feast of Tabernacles sermon video!

Peter Eddington

Feast of Tabernacles: Sri Lanka

The United Church of God is pleased to announce a Feast of Tabernacles site in Sri Lanka. We have a congregation of 16 in Sri Lanka and they would love to have some guests for the Feast. Sri Lanka is a small island of diversity off the southern coast of India. The climate is tropical, the people are wonderful and hospitable and the food is delicious. The location of the Feast site will be the Neptune Hotel located in Beruwela, which is 35 miles south of the capital city, Colombo. Photos of the hotel can be viewed at <http://www.aitkenspenceholidays.com/neptune/>. The rates are for full board and are as follows: single—US\$55; double—US\$65; triple—US\$87. If anyone would like additional information, they can contact David Baker by e-mail at david_baker@ucg.org or call (585) 624-5166.

David Baker

Good News Print Advertising Targets Younger Audience

In our ongoing efforts to reach a younger audience with the gospel message, close to 16,000 new mothers, whose median age is 28, were added to the *Good News* subscriber files during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Our four-color, 5½" by 8½" bifold subscription brochure "Are You Prepared to Teach Values?" was included in 1.6 million *American Baby* Group's co-op mailing packages. In the 2005-2006 fiscal year, we expect to add an additional 34,000 or more new mothers to the files, by advertising *The Good News* and our new marriage and family booklet to 3.33 million new mothers.

Also, over 2,600 parents of homeschooled children were added to the *Good News* subscriber files during the last fiscal year. According to National Response Marketing, Inc., the company mailing "card packs" to homeschooling families, the median age of their target audience is 38. During the 2004-2005 fiscal year our 3½" by 5½" inserts were included in 600,000 card packs mailed to these families. Of the four new insert cards promoted this year, the highest response came on the subject of creation versus evolution. In the 2005-2006 fiscal year we expect to again mail to 600,000 parents of homeschooled children using four brand-new insert cards covering the following topics: "You Can Understand Bible Prophecy," "Does God Exist?" "Why Does God Allow Suffering?" and "Is There Really a Devil?"

Additionally, during the 2004-2005 fiscal year, 560,000 four-color, 5½” by 8½” bifold “take one” brochures were distributed on “Good Neighbor” displays in 4,000 major supermarkets and discount stores. As a result, nearly 8,500 *Good News* subscriptions have so far been added to the files. The highest response came from our brochure advertising the booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. The large, attractive displays located in the entrances and exits of many Wal-Mart, A&P, Safeway, Kroger and other large chains have proved to be excellent advertising venues. We know that many of our brochures are picked up by younger subscribers, since demographic studies show the median age of store display visitors is 39. Beginning in October 2005 we plan to begin distributing 478,000 subscription brochures of five brand-new titles on 4,550 “Good Neighbor” displays in stores all across the United States.

During the 2005-2006 fiscal year the majority of our *Good News* print advertising budget will be directed toward programs targeting a younger audience.

John LaBissoniere

Media Center

Here at the home office construction has begun in earnest for the Church's media center. The walls to enclose the space have been framed and the drywall is half completed. Electrical wiring is being run this week and the insulation is on site ready to be installed. Once the studio area and three offices are painted and finished (probably in about four week's time), the on-camera set will be put together and cameras, lighting and editing equipment purchased. A production meeting will be held soon to finalize the format and look of our new video program. We'd certainly appreciate your prayers for God's involvement in the success of our gospel efforts in this regard!

Peter Eddington

Personal Correspondence

Cecil Maranville, the Church's main Personal Correspondence writer, answered 120 letters in May, along with six questions by e-mail. A team of ministers who volunteer to answer Internet Personal Correspondence handled another 110 messages, and the *Vertical Thought* team answered 43. Here are some highlights from May:

A former WCG member, now an inmate, wants to become an active member of UCG. He wonders if it's necessary for him to be baptized again. Another inmate whose mother was a member of WCG asks if we are connected to it in any way, because he recognizes a similar message. Another subscriber (not an inmate) who used to subscribe to *The Plain Truth* recognizes the same themes and asks if we are connected to that magazine.

Another subscriber asked if the bar code that we use on our literature is the mark of the Beast. In another letter, the husband of a subscriber demands that we cancel her subscription, which she says she did not request. He also demands to know who sent the request to us in her name. Apparently, he is well known in his local area as an atheist. Our citing the scripture, “the fool has said in his heart that there is no God” was, he claims, an obvious attempt on our part to alienate his wife's affection for him! We attempted to tactfully tell him that we didn't publish a magazine of nearly half a million copies for one person and that, meaning no offense, we truly had no knowledge of him.

Africa presents unique challenges. A subscriber asked us to pray that he would be safe from witches and wizards. Coincidentally, an American subscriber (a female inmate) wrote for help and counsel, fearing that she has been put under a voodoo curse.

We received 13 requests from different inmates for ministerial counsel. We offered PCD services to all of them. And we heard from the inmate about whom I reported last month, on whose behalf I spoke on the telephone to a high official in the department of corrections. The inmate wrote that the chaplain just left his cell with the paperwork signed. “He said that he was told to hand deliver the completed paperwork to the kitchen management and personally put my name on the...sheet and bring a copy to me and fax a

copy to Central Office by the end of swing shift or he would lose his job. He was out of breath when he came rushing into the dorm. I have not ever seen him in such a state of urgency. What was said to [the state official]? Whatever was said, it shook him up real bad. Anyway, I think things have been taken care of here. Thank you for calling on my behalf.” Of course, the reason for the expedited service was this official’s personal respect for the Church, not anything that I said. But it is a “good news” story that is nice to hear.

I am always surprised by some questions, in spite of having worked with thousands of questions over the years. I have never seen this one: When Christ returns, isn’t there a chance that He would come as a woman? Nor have I heard this one that came this month: Is it possible that God created Eve by causing her to evolve through chimpanzees?

We received a few questions about Herbert W. Armstrong. A couple asked if we believe he was the modern Elijah (one wanted to know if we have received any new prophecies since Mr. Armstrong’s death). A former coworker criticized us for forsaking Mr. Armstrong’s teachings—but he didn’t offer any specifics on why he thinks this. A reader asked where he could obtain Mr. Armstrong’s writings.

The recent Q&A in *The Good News* about the Trinity sparked a host of questions—most of them challenges to our denial of the Trinity doctrine.

Cecil Maranville

Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky

Due to many inquiries and requests for planning purposes, we would like to inform everyone that this year’s Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, will begin Friday evening, December 23, and end late Tuesday night (December 27) with travel home date set for Wednesday, December 28.

All the details about this year’s exciting event will be coming out in the month of August. This includes hotel pricing and phone numbers along with the lengthy list of planned activities. Please make a note of this on your calendar and plan to join in the fun and fellowship.

Mark Winner

Writing Class Results

An introductory writing class was offered in the “Home Office Update” in January, and more than 150 people signed up. They were almost evenly divided between men and women. They received five e-mailed “lessons” during the months of March, April and May, and many students completed three assignments and an optional editing test.

From the first assignment of “thought for the day” e-mail messages, 170 were received. Of these about 50 class contributions have been approved by coordinator Bob Berendt and submitted for use in the new “This Is the Way” e-mail program. Mr. Berendt requested that six writers who did well with the “This Is the Way” blurbs be invited to write five or six items each month.

The second assignment was to write “query” letters to offer to write an article for *United News*, *Vertical Thought* or *Virtual Christian Magazine*. The third assignment brought in more than 50 articles. A rough count shows 36 for *United News*, 11 for *Virtual Christian Magazine* and nine for *Vertical Thought*. Of these, 13 have already run in *United News* (mostly in “Treasure Digest”), one is currently on the *Vertical Thought* Web site and another in the next issue of *Vertical Thought*. Several more are planned for each of the publications.

The optional editing assignment also revealed several students with good potential. So far two students have been invited and have joined the volunteer *Virtual Christian Magazine* editing team.

Our thanks to those who participated in the class. We hope they will continue to develop their writing skills.

Mike Bennett