

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

Home Office Update October 6, 2005

Happy Feast greetings to everyone!

I trust the Feast of Trumpets got everyone off to a great start to this festival season, and on behalf of everyone here at the home office, we hope each of you has a peaceful and spiritually rich Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

An “oldies” radio station I sometimes listen to recently played a hit song from the late ’60s, “Live for Today,” which spouted the philosophy of the day in phrases such as: “May others plan their future, I’m busy loving you” . . . “Live for today, and don’t worry ’bout tomorrow” . . . “We’ll take the most from living, have pleasure while we can” . . . etc. Though the song faded into obscurity, the philosophy didn’t. The powerful related forces of secularism, post-modernism, relativism and rationalism have become deeply rooted in the world’s spiritual and cultural mind-set, subtly and steadily entrenching a “live for today” value system in this world’s thinking.

It’s understandable that this would happen. Hope for the future must be drawn from a highly esteemed God and an equally respected authoritative source of knowledge, His Word. But when alternate philosophies gain acceptance, God is pushed farther out of the picture. This is not new, of course. Paul battled the views of skeptics on such issues as Christ’s return and the resurrection, and reasoned with the Corinthians that if we lose sight and hope of the future resurrection, then we might as well adopt the live-for-today notion of “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Corinthians 15:32; see also Isaiah 22:12-13). If we don’t see the reality of Christ returning, then we won’t see the reality of the resurrections, or judgment against evil, or reward for righteousness, or a future Kingdom or hope for mankind! And certainly we would see no reason to lead a life of spiritual discipline today!

Such ideas stand in stark contrast to what these feasts and Holy Days picture! God gives us a marvelous vision of hope and purpose that lifts us far above the mundane grind of life. He links us into the chain of His people who, from the beginning, have “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). We have been given a different perspective than this world’s, with a focus on the future, but it’s a perspective that also shapes the way we live in the present (11:13-16). We base our commitment on faith, as this chapter emphasizes, but it’s not blind. Indeed, we view “living for today” as the blindest of faiths!

The Word of God, and “the feasts of the LORD” in particular, cast our eyes beyond today. The feasts capture the core of the gospel, the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Every effort to preach the gospel to the world is, in essence, an attempt to help people look beyond today, to truly see, through the plan of God, the coming Kingdom and the world tomorrow.

In that context, I am pleased to announce that the Council of Elders recently approved the name for the new video program (for both television and Internet) that we will soon begin producing at the home office. We are going to call it, *Beyond Today: Understanding Your Future*. The main title, *Beyond Today*, obviously speaks to the hope we preach of God’s soon-coming Kingdom, but we will also focus on helping viewers grasp the gospel’s relevance to their lives today, how that “godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). We are pleased to have a program name that is as visionary as the gospel it conveys. You can read more details in the media center progress report following.

That’s all for now. Again, have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles, travel safely, and let’s keep one another in our prayers every day.

With warm regards,
Clyde Kilough

Feast of Tabernacles, Sermon Video—“Bringing Light to the World”

This year we are pleased to once again have a special sermon video at the Feast of Tabernacles that focuses on the mission and vision of the Church. In the sermon presentation titled, “Bringing Light to the World,” we examine the work of God’s people to bring God’s light and truth to all of mankind as we look forward to Christ’s promised return to earth.

The message will revolve around an analogy based on explorer David Livingstone’s famous comment about darkest Africa. However, not only does Africa need the light of the gospel, but so does the whole world. In the video, Bill Jahns, the pastor serving Malawi, uses the example of Livingstone to illustrate Christ’s promised return to bring light to all of humankind and begin His millennial reign.

In addition, interviews with various elders and members in southern Africa will help illustrate how Christians continue to fight the good fight in their daily lives as they wait for Christ. Clyde Kilough, president, will show what United as a whole is doing in anticipation of that day, by giving a tour of the home office with his wife, Dee. They show the home office staff involved directly in preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom and caring for God’s people.

The sermon will be about 62 minutes in length and DVD copies were mailed to all Feast site coordinators three weeks ago.

Peter Eddington

Editorial Update

We’re in the process of wrapping up the November-December *Good News*, which will be printed and mailed just before the Feast.

This issue has been a real challenge in several respects. Due to the timing of the Feast this year, we’ve had to complete this issue about two weeks earlier than usual to have it done before leaving for the Feast.

Knowing that, we had worked really hard to get ahead and had most of the content lined up and ready to start layouts five or six weeks ago. Then Hurricane Katrina came along, followed by Hurricane Rita. In light of this most expensive disaster in U.S. history, we decided to scrap the planned issue and produce a new one around the theme of natural disasters such as Katrina. As a result, the last few weeks have been a mad scramble to redo the issue with mostly new content. But it’s worked out well, and we can take advantage of all the news about the hurricanes to point readers to what the Bible says about disasters like this and the signs of the end times.

Many of our regular writers will be traveling to international sites this year for the Feast, which will no doubt help in generating article ideas and more in-depth perspectives for our media efforts.

Scott Ashley

Media Center Progress

We’re excited to give you an update on construction progress at the home office’s new media center. The on-camera set is 95 percent complete, and almost all of the technical equipment has been purchased. Cameras, editing equipment, studio lighting, sound equipment and other supplies should basically be in place before we leave for the Feast of Tabernacles break.

Plans are to begin recording our first four programs during the third week of November. There are some loose ends to tie up yet, but we hope to keep on schedule in this regard. We’re very pleased with the possibilities of airing United’s new video program on free cable-access community TV stations, and we will capitalize upon the latest streaming technology to broadcast the message of God’s Kingdom on a new multimedia Web site that will operate night and day.

As mentioned in Mr. Kilough's introductory letter, the new program will be titled *Beyond Today: Understanding Your Future*. Selecting a title was actually a tremendous challenge, and we evaluated nearly 300 suggested titles! In addition to finding the name that accurately captures the concept of the program, similar Internet domain names must also be available in order to link viewers to the Church. We use the subtitle "A Magazine of Understanding" for our *Good News* magazine, and we also use the subtitle "A Magazine of Understanding for Tomorrow's Leaders" for our *Vertical Thought* magazine. Using "Understanding Your Future" for the video program will help tie together the branding of our various media efforts. A Web site domain name has been secured, www.beyondtoday.tv, and also a toll-free telephone number with "TODAY" in the numbers. Please continue to pray for the success of this new endeavor as we work diligently to preach the gospel message.

Peter Eddington

Shipping Costs!

While doors are open for preaching the gospel, other obstacles are hindering us from walking through them as we would like, and we sincerely ask you to join us in praying about this matter. We have seen an unexpected sharp rise in our shipping and mailing costs for our magazines and booklets this fiscal year, particularly to international regions. Fuel surcharges and increased postage costs have really begun to make a difference, especially for shipping outside of the United States. In some cost centers we have already spent more than 50 percent of our annual shipping budget, and we're only 25 percent into the fiscal year. This is particularly true for our booklet mailings, *United News*, *World News and Prophecy* and *Vertical Thought*.

To help reduce some of these expenses we have altered our online literature request forms to accept a maximum of three pieces of literature ordered at one time, down from a maximum of five up until now. We have also discontinued our Internet advertising in Africa and Asia. We continue to meet with various shipping representatives to get the best possible cost savings, but overall costs have risen sharply. In addition, we are encouraging our Web site visitors to read as much material online as possible, even printing off their own copy, to cut down somewhat on the number of hard copies being mailed. The Internet continues to be one of our most cost-effective tools. Since all of our material is available online, we encourage our interested readers to avail themselves of that media source.

Also, we are in the process of renewing all our *World News and Prophecy* subscribers in countries outside of the United States where we handle the mailing list. (This excludes areas where we have a national office that handles its own subscribers, but includes about 100 other countries that we mail to.) This renewal effort will cut down somewhat on our mailing expenses by natural attrition of the subscriber list. Every little bit will help.

So please pray that God will continue to provide the resources so that we can be as aggressive as possible in fulfilling our mission.

Peter Eddington

Good News Brochure Program

Since the upgraded *Good News* brochure "take-one" program began last January, over 300 brethren and many congregations have ordered hundreds of brochures and placed nearly 1,500 displays in various stores and other locations. So far, close to 1,400 requests for booklets/*Good News* subscriptions have been received at the home office. This quantity will continue to rise as the brochures on hand in brethren's homes are placed before the public.

Brethren are welcome to order additional supplies of brochures and displays. The brochure titles include the following: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*, *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. Those with Internet access are welcome to request supplies via e-mail from john_labissoniere@ucg.org or they may call toll-free (888) 369-9940.

John LaBissoniere

Personal Correspondence

As usual, the scores of letters answered each month by the Personal Correspondence Department contain quite a variety of topics. We handled several questions about UCG in September: Are we involved in politics; do we have any prophets in the Church today; are we Messianic Jews; do we have rock music in our church services; how are we different from the Jehovah's Witnesses; how do we differ from, and what is our relationship with, other Churches of God; what is our history?

And, we dealt with several counseling issues of a serious nature. One woman who lost a child in a miscarriage several years ago is still dealing with anger toward God over the matter; she asked for help in understanding and overcoming. Another young mother living in an isolated and remote area asked for help dealing with depression. A subscriber facing a long prison term sought advice on how to survive incarceration and how to get his children to communicate with him. A man who has been without work for a long time said that family members advised him to falsify his resume; he asked if that would be wrong.

We received one request for assistance from a subscriber who said that she was destitute after Hurricane Katrina and that FEMA had not yet arrived to help her. Also, a coworker asked for financial assistance to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. In the unusual category, a subscriber whose mother had been denied assistance by her Protestant church to purchase a used car asked us how UCG would handle such a request. And a man who said he was an ordained minister asked us to supply him with sermon outlines, written prayers and wedding and funeral ceremonies, explaining that his church wanted to charge him too much for them!

Several wrote this month about whether they needed to be rebaptized. One was baptized Seventh-Day Adventist; another by a Baptist church. Two others (inmates) explained that they have been baptized several times already, because they have belonged to several different faiths. Another, realizing she did not have the laying on of hands, asked if this means she needs to be baptized again.

We had 10 serious prayer requests, dealing with health, financial and family matters.

In the unusual category, a subscriber explained that he believes the Sabbath commandment is "only a promise to those who are in Christ" and asked us to comment (we did!). An inmate asked for guidance on undertaking a Nazarite vow. A reader noted that polygraphs are not admissible in court testimony and inquired if God has any opinion about this. And a subscriber suggested that we initiate a contest in *The Good News*, publishing a difficult question every issue and offering prizes ("such as tickets to a Gospel music show") to those who came up with the correct answers; he further offered to manage the contest for us and to be the custodian of the prizes. By the way, we politely declined his offer!

Cecil Maranville