

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

Home Office Update March 9, 2006

Dear Brethren,

Spring is definitely in the air here in Cincinnati, and the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are just around the corner, just over four weeks away! You've heard it said before, but it bears repeating: the strength of the Church will always be found in its spiritual condition, not in its numbers. Although we strive on a year-round basis to strengthen our spiritual condition, in the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread season we particularly focus on our relationship with God, overcoming sin and becoming more like our elder Brother, Jesus Christ. Let's pray especially during this time that God will inspire, teach, correct and help us in ways that will strengthen us greatly.

This weekend marks a very special milestone for the Houston, Texas, congregation, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Houston is well represented here at the home office, as several staff members, as well as a number of ABC students, have either our church roots or previous ministerial experience there. Jim and Sharron Franks, Tom and Sarah Kirkpatrick, Dave and Becky Johnson and Dee and I will be traveling there to join some 600 other members and ministers for this homecoming festivity.

Landmark events such as this stimulate a lot of reminiscing, and I've thought a lot in recent weeks about my family's calling, what it was like when we started attending church services in 1963, the people we met, the messages we heard and how all of these factors influenced our lives. God performs the miracle of opening our minds and bringing us into His Church, but the people He places us with play a very important role in shaping our lives as well. All of these memories have reinforced the lesson in my mind again of how very important it is for us to really strive to be a godly family, to love, help, encourage and support one another. John chapters 13 through 17 make it very plain that Jesus had that weighing heavily on His mind, as He prepared to give His life for us, His beloved family. We, too, with His Spirit and heart, can walk in His same steps.

On March 1 we wrapped up another successful meeting of the Council of Elders, where we focused primarily on the 2006-2007 Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and budget. We are going to present the General Conference of Elders, at the annual GCE meeting in May, a budget highlighted by a nearly 5 percent increase over this year's, which is very encouraging. I suppose we all scratch our heads at times when we look at the world's political, economic, military and moral condition, and wonder how much longer humanity can hold this thing together! Yet God has continued to bless us, and as long as He gives us the means and opportunities, we will work as hard as possible to deliver the good news to this world. What God does, He does through you, so thank you again for your continual backing and, in many cases, true sacrifices, to support the Church's efforts.

Clyde Kilough

Ambassador Bible Center Update

Module on Prophecy, Daniel and Revelation Completed. The ABC students have just completed the three-week module on Daniel and Revelation taught by Melvin Rhodes. This class of 2006 has a special interest in prophecy, and the course added a lot of excitement to the curriculum this past month.

The next module is set to begin March 13. The module is on the Doctrines of the Church, taught by Jim Franks.

Student Officers and Leaders Selected. On February 16, ABC announced the officers and leaders selected to serve and lead the class of 2006. After receiving input from the students through balloting and in discussion with the ABC administrative team, the leaders were selected.

The officers are: president, Chris Stewart; secretary, Laura Beth Childers; and treasurer, Eduardo Elizondo.

The committee heads are: Social Activities, Amanda Weitzel; Service Projects, Stephanie Healey; Music Coordinators, Corbin Rose and Audry Bauer; Message Board, Crystal Pettigrew; Kitchen Care, Cynthia Eckman and John Marinkov; *ABC Times*, Erin Roscoe; ABC Web Page, Jason Nitzberg; and Technical Support, A.J. Smith.

Congratulations to all of the student leaders for 2006. The level of respect the class has for each other was evident in how many different names were put forth for the various positions by the students.

Ghana Youth Corps Volunteers Selected From ABC. This year three volunteers were selected from the ABC students to help with the UCG camp in Ghana next August. Partial scholarships were offered to the ABC students, as a part of their education and opportunities for service in the Church. The students selected are Laura Beth Childers, Zachary Smith and Francesca Nixon. They will join three other young adults who were selected by the Youth Education Team to serve with the United Youth Corps in Ghana this summer. Melvin Rhodes and Doug Horchak will accompany the Youth Corps volunteers to the Ghana camp.

Now Accepting Applicants for 2007. We have already received nine applications for the 2007 ABC class year. We may be on track for another large class attending ABC in 2007. If anyone is interested in attending ABC, we would suggest applying early for the 2007 class!

Dave Register

Beyond Today Web Site Visitors and Program Response

The first three months of activity at the *Beyond Today* Web site went very well overall. We had 4,844 visitors to the site in December of 2005, and then a very healthy increase to 13,115 for January of 2006, and then 13,618 in February.

Gary Petty recorded four new programs on March 8 and 9, with guests Todd Carey, David Myers, Gary Antion, Randy Stiver and Ralph Levy. The subjects covered were as follows:

1. Christians Who Don't Keep Easter (Petty/Levy/Stiver).
2. The Four Seasons of Parenting (Petty/Myers/Carey).
3. Changing Your Life Is Possible (Petty/Myers/Carey).
4. Displaying the Ten Commandments (Petty/Antion/Stiver).

This brings the total number recorded to 20, with about 16 of them already edited and ready to air. All aired programs can be viewed online at www.beyondtoday.tv.

Beyond Today is scheduled to air on more than 150 channels at present. During our program start-up during the last week of December 2005, we received 63 responses to *Beyond Today*, and then for January 2006 we received 262, followed by 306 for February. We anticipate that March will continue to show a steady increase once again as more stations come on board and an audience is developed.

So far, overall response to United's new video effort has been very positive. Some helpful suggestions have been received from some of our members, some of them professionals in the field, and so we plan

to incorporate new ideas and continue to improve the technical quality and, most of all, the content, of *Beyond Today*.

Here is a sample of the kind of e-mails we have been receiving from some of our viewers:

“I found your site, after seeing it advertised on the back of the *Good News* magazine, and downloaded the video programmes. I watched a couple so far, and I think they are excellent, well-put together, enjoyable and educational. Certainly very professional and a step forward in the right direction... Thanks for making these and for making them available online.”

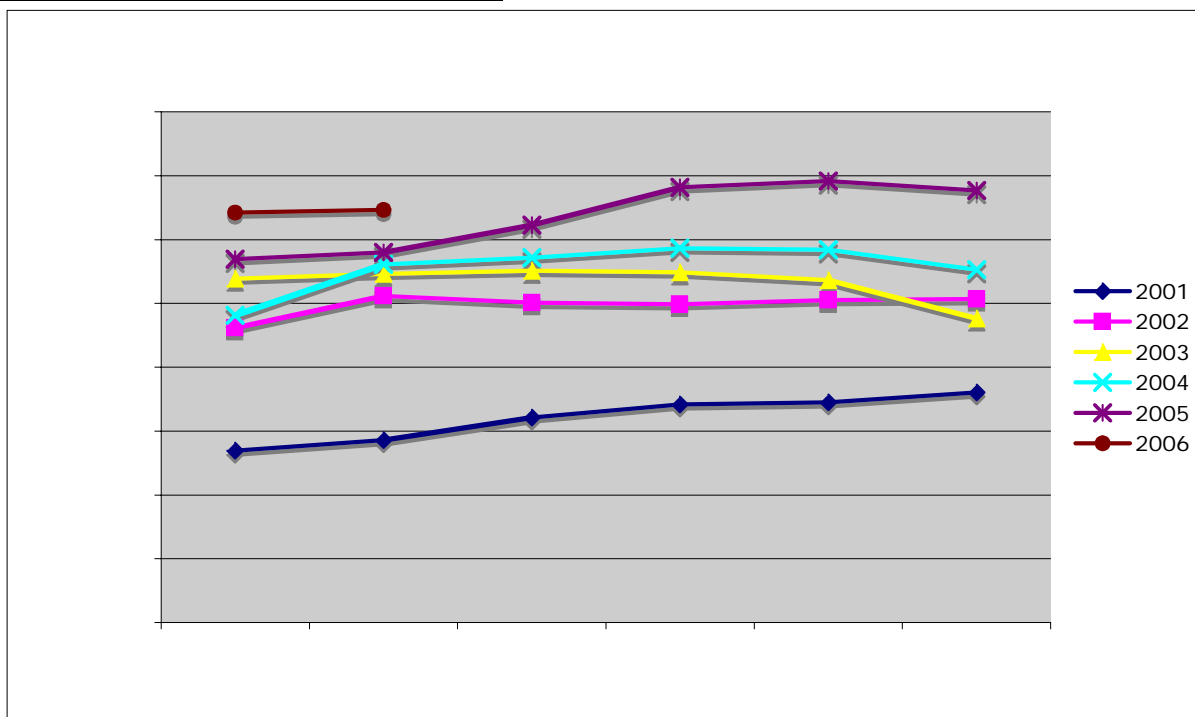
David K.

The popular online search tool, Google, offers a video search feature where registered users can upload videos to the Google video Web site. As of the end of February, we have 10 *Beyond Today* TV programs posted for free. In just a few weeks these programs have been viewed over 3,000 times. The most popular program—“Is There Life After Death?”—has generated over 1,700 views.

Thanks to this new feature from Google we are able to reach more people online with the *Beyond Today* TV program than we would from only the beyondtoday.tv Web site. This is all at no additional cost to the Church.

Peter Eddington

The Good News Reaches New Subscribers



The March/April print run for *The Good News* magazine was 402,670 copies. With a renewal rate of approximately 25 percent, and with around 323,000 U.S. subscribers on file, this means we need to advertise and replace 121,000 subscribers per year who do not renew—which we are consistently doing. If we wish to increase our subscription numbers, then we have to advertise to additional people as well. It’s encouraging to see that we are reaching more than 120,000 new readers every year!

Print promotions for the *GN* magazine are going into 5.2 million homes this fiscal year. We have several card-deck advertising efforts underway plus supermarket brochure displays and member participation programs in full swing. Overall cost per response is expected to be around \$4 for all of these projects.

Once again, much of our advertising campaign is aimed at young families and first-time mothers using card decks and subscription brochures.

The Church's print advertising is in addition to our electronic advertising on the Internet, radio and television. Please continue to pray that our efforts to "sow the seed" of God's truth will fall on fertile ground, and that God will call those whom He will to receive salvation and to further serve as laborers in this great task.

Peter Eddington

Good News Print Advertising

Over 5.2 million U.S. households will be reached this fiscal year through *Good News* print advertising. Demographic statistics confirm that through focused use of card packs, co-op mailers and subscription brochures, we are vigorously targeting a "young family" audience in the 25-42 age range.

As part of this intensive effort, distribution of 500,000 copies of five new 5½-inch by 8½-inch bifold brochures on "Good Neighbor" displays is nearly complete. The brochure titles included: "You Can Understand Bible Prophecy," "Is There Really a Devil?" "Creation or Evolution?" "What Happens After Death?" and "Does God Exist?" These eye-catching brochures, which offer a booklet and a *Good News* subscription, were positioned on large, attractive "take one" displays in the vestibules of 4,300 leading supermarkets and discount stores.

Response to this year's "Good Neighbor" campaign has been outstanding. So far, 11,293 new responses have been tabulated, providing an excellent 2.3 percent response and a cost per response of only \$3.70.

Please continue praying for God's blessings on the Church's advertising operations around the globe. The world needs the *Good News* now more than ever.

John LaBissoniere

Festival Update

Online Feast Registration. Festival registration in the United States and Canada will now be finalized online. This new format will not affect the members in how they register, which is to cut out the registration form from the March/April issue of *United News* and give it their local congregation Feast advisor.

The Feast advisor or the pastor will be provided a pass code for each congregation. That person will go to the appropriate area on the UCG Web site and enter the data during a specified week for his congregation. After the data-entry deadline, the Web site will be closed. The data will be automatically tabulated to create spreadsheets with the needed statistics. Sometime in August the Web site will be opened for another week. The pass code will allow entry and any registration updates and changes can be made at that time.

Instructions for this new procedure will be coming soon to all pastors to provide to their Festival advisors. The workload for the local Feast advisor will remain the same, and the great advantage will be in time savings for home office staff in no longer needing to personally enter and tabulate the numbers.

Anchorage, Alaska, 2007. As previously announced, Anchorage, Alaska, will be a "specialty site" for 2007. The definition of a "specialty site" is a Feast site that is not intended to be sponsored every year. For instance, the Biblical Tour of Turkey for 2006 is considered a specialty Feast site.

Anchorage will not be considered again as a possible site till 2010. Originally we hoped the Captain Cook Hotel would host the Feast. However, change in hotel sales staffing led to drastic changes other than the originally agreed upon rates and stipulations. A contract has been signed with the Sheraton Anchorage, which is where the Feast was held in 2004. Details and registration for this Feast site will come out in late 2006.

Biblical Tour of Turkey. We still have 20 available spaces for the Biblical Tour of Turkey Feast site for those who are interested. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Charles Melear

Personal Correspondence

For the month of February, I answered 89 surface mail letters and two e-mails. The Internet PC team answered another 93 e-mails and the *Vertical Thought* PC team provided 38 answers.

In the “unusual” category, we had a request from a *GN* subscriber in Iraq, wanting to know if he could access *Beyond Today* TV via satellite there. We received a complaint from a former subscriber for not renewing his subscription. Twice in the past, the same individual subscribed and then later told us to take his name off of our mailing list. A Central American subscriber complained that our advice regarding homosexuality does not work in his culture. An inmate who is a prospective member has been given a job on the prison newspaper to write articles about religion; he asked for permission to reproduce UCG articles in the paper.

Inmates often pass our literature around, which leads to some surprises. This month, we received a request from an inmate who isn't even on our files for us to write his chaplain with a letter of support for his request to have the Sabbath and Holy Days off. And we received a baptism request from another inmate not on our files, but who is intimately familiar with all of our major publications. He seems to have good spiritual understanding. And we wrote a letter of encouragement to an inmate who is a prospective member and is overcome with a sense of worthlessness, wondering what God could possibly see in him.

Five letters were received on the subject of baptism, including one from a person who would like to be baptized in the proper manner, but he would like to continue his membership in a denomination that only sprinkles converts.

There were three letters about suicides this month. One wanted to know why a loving God would allow someone to take her own life. Another asked what the fate is of a person who dies in this manner. A subscriber who was acquainted with both people who died in a murder-suicide wanted to know if they would both go to heaven—a subject that we had to deal with in “layers,” addressing the heaven issue, as well as the others.

On the hot topic of abortion, a reader asked if abortion is always murder. Perhaps due to the pre-Passover season, we had five different questions about the sacred calendar. A subscriber from a West African country wrote that she has come to believe the truth about the pagan holidays, and she sought our advice on getting along with her family and in her church, where she is a Sunday school teacher.

Cecil Maranville