

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

Home Office Update May 3, 2006

Dear Friends,

Here in Cincinnati we are reveling in a beautiful spring season that has burst on the scene with warm days, budding trees and blooming flowers! The winter was mild here, but nevertheless it's always nice to see God's creation come out of its dormant stage and to be once again inspired by the splendor He has provided us.

The reports from many areas about the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread were very inspirational and, once again, I want to convey to you how much we appreciate the spiritual stability and dedication of all God's people scattered around the world. If you haven't had a chance yet, I would encourage you to watch the last two Compass Checks on the UCG Web site, as Jim Franks and Dave Register give very interesting reports on their visits to Nigeria and Jamaica.

We are now hard at work preparing for the 2006 Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders taking place this weekend. The official business meeting occurs on Sunday, May 7, but we have a full schedule for several days before and after. Most of the international ministers arrive as early as Thursday, then we have a major Sabbath event with dozens of congregations and thousands of brethren tied in live through webcast or phone hookup. On Monday we complete the conference with a full day of seminars and workshops, featuring the theme "Service and Leadership—Today, Tomorrow and Beyond." Not everyone goes home, though, as the U.S. regional pastors continue with a one-day conference on Tuesday, and the Council convenes for its quarterly meeting Tuesday through Thursday.

The high attendance rate reflects how much everyone looks forward to this annual conference. Not only do we get a lot of work done, but just seeing old friends and making new ones is very unifying and beneficial.

You will be receiving a lot of information from the conference, so stay tuned for more news of the work. In the meantime, in this *Home Office Update* you will find a number of items of interest. Thanks again for all you do!

Clyde Kilough

Ministerial Services

The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread were most inspiring. The attendance in the United States was up over last year and so were the offerings. This is a most encouraging trend. We also conducted the first two conferences under the auspices of the Ministerial Development Program. Richard Pinelli and Clyde Kilough traveled to Denver for two days of meetings with the pastors in the Mountain Region. Following these meetings, Richard Pinelli and Lyle Welty traveled to Calgary, Alberta, Canada, for a similar round of workshops.

These meetings are designed to maximize discussion on identifying and developing men for the pastoral ministry. We all acknowledge that the ministry is a special calling, but this understanding should not inhibit our efforts to identify those who are being called. From all accounts these workshops have been well received, and we are quite excited about the development of future programs.

We have four more workshops planned between now and July 1: May 16-17 in Houston for the South Central Region; May 20-21 in eastern Canada; June 26-27 in Atlanta for the Southeast Region; and June 28-29 in Philadelphia for the Northeast Region. After the new fiscal year begins (July 1) we will work on the schedule for the five remaining regions.

Everyone here in the home office is busily preparing for the GCE. We look forward to seeing many old friends from all parts of the globe. It should be exciting!

Jim Franks

2006 Preliminary Holy Day Offering Figures

First Day of Unleavened Bread

2006 Offering Information (reported)

Attendance: 13,248
Offering: \$764,048.09 *
Average per person: \$57.67

2005 Offering Information (reported)

Attendance: 13,092
Offering: \$743,162.46
Average per person: \$56.76

This represents a 1.2 percent **increase** in attendance over 2005, and a 2.8 percent **increase** in the offering amount over 2005.

* Once all offerings that were individually mailed to home office are processed, this figure should reach \$780,000.

Last Day of Unleavened Bread

2006 Information (reported)

Attendance: 12,026
Offering: \$738,648.30 *
Average per person: \$61.42

2005 Information (reported)

Attendance: 11,922
Offering: \$715,708.94
Average per person: \$60.03

This represents a 0.9 percent **increase** in attendance over 2005, and a 3.2 percent **increase** in the offering amount over 2005.

* Once all offerings that were individually mailed to the home office are processed, this figure may reach around \$760,000.

Gerald Seelig

Ambassador Bible Center Update

At Ambassador Bible Center we have completed our first semester. The second semester has begun with Richard Thompson here to teach his second three-week class module on the Gospels.

The ABC Chorale has begun to travel to local congregations in the area to perform special music for Sabbath services. The chorale is planning to visit several congregations in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio over the next three months.

We have already received over 30 applications for the 2007 ABC academic year, and we have accepted over 20 so far. Applications received at ABC are running well ahead of last year, and we are anticipating a large class again for 2007! Please encourage anyone interested in attending ABC in 2007 to apply as early as possible.

Dave Register

Beyond Today Program Recordings

In years past, the Church of God capitalized on the emerging media of the time—whether it was the printed word, radio or television. Today it should be no different. One area that we are now tapping into more effectively is *streaming video on the Internet*.

The first five months of activity at the *Beyond Today* Web site continue to show healthy increases. We had 4,844 visitors to the site in December of 2005, 13,115 for January, 13,618 in February, 21,119 visits for March—a 55 percent jump—and then 32,440 for April—another 54 percent increase!

Beyond Today is scheduled to air on more than 160 cable access 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, 306 for February, 461 for March—a very encouraging 51 percent increase—and now 567 for April—another 23 percent increase.

Darris McNeely will record four new programs on May 10 and 11, with guests Scott Ashley, Melvin Rhodes, Gary Antion and Mario Seiglie. The subjects to be covered are as follows:

1. War on Terror: Clash of Civilizations (McNeely/Ashley/Rhodes).
2. The Future of Europe (McNeely/Ashley/Rhodes).
3. Where Have Fathers Gone? (McNeely/Seiglie/Antion).
4. Jesus, Judas and Da Vinci (McNeely/Ashley/Antion).

This will bring the total number of programs recorded to 24, with 20 of them already edited and ready to air. All aired programs can be viewed online at www.beyondtoday.tv.

Peter Eddington

Attention Graduating Seniors and Parents!

(Note to pastors and elders: Could you make sure all parents of graduating high school seniors get a copy of this? Thanks!)

Congratulations! We would like to feature the 2006 high school graduates in a special section of the July *United News*. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and send a photograph by June 12, 2006.

1. Graduate's Name
2. Parents' Names
3. Congregation and Pastor's Name
4. High School Accomplishments
5. Church Activities/Hobbies/Interests (tell a little bit about yourself)
6. Plans after Graduation
7. Additional Comments (favorite quote, favorite scripture, motto, advice, etc. Please identify which it is, so we don't think your advice is your motto, etc.)
8. Phone number or e-mail address to confirm spellings, etc. (*Will Not Be Printed*)

Please send with a recent photo (conforming with biblical standards of dress and hair length) of the graduate by June 12 by e-mail to mike_bennett@ucg.org or by mail to *United News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length; 250-word maximum length. Thanks!

Mike Bennett

Feast of Tabernacles

Festival Planning Brochure: The 2006 *Festival Planning Brochure* has been mailed to U.S. members, and they should be receiving it in the mail over the next few weeks. Here are some key dates to note:

- May 15: Early housing arrangements may begin *only* for those who qualify (see guidelines below).
- June 3: Notification at services if any U.S. and Canadian sites cannot accept all transfer requests.
(Automatic transfer approval is expected for all U.S. and Canadian sites except Panama City Beach, Florida.)
- June 11: Members may make housing reservations for U.S. and Canadian sites beginning at 10 a.m. in the time zone of the site.

Early Housing Pass Code: Kerrville and Steamboat Springs require a pass code to make early housing reservations. Check with your Festival advisor or pastor to acquire access to this code if you qualify for early housing.

Early Housing Guidelines: Those seeking to register for housing early must receive approval from their pastor. The guidelines are:

- (1) Handicapped—this includes those who absolutely must have a first floor room or no steps. However, if all the properties have elevators, then handicapped members would not need to call early.
- (2) Financial—this is to make sure less expensive rooms are available to those who actually need them. If people who can afford more expensive rooms reserved all the cheaper rooms, some would not be able to attend the Feast.
- (3) Families of six or more—this is for immediate family members who live together in the same home (for example, this is *not* for a sister who lives out of state and another brother who might live in the same town as the parents, but who lives in his own apartment). Groups and families getting together at the Feast should wait until June 11.
- (4) Festival staff—where they specifically need to make early reservations. This is based on need, not as a perk for service. Ministers are not to make early reservations unless it is a need.

Charles Melear

General Conference of Elders

About 210 elders and 160 wives have registered to attend the General Conference of Elders Annual Meeting this weekend in Cincinnati. If you will be attending in Cincinnati (even if not staying at the hotel) and haven't registered, please contact Charles Melear as soon as possible.

All pastors and elders who signed up to receive information on phone hookups and Internet connections should have received that information by now. If not, contact Charles Melear at (970) 484-5878.

Charles Melear

Personal Correspondence

We processed 100 letters in Personal Correspondence for April, and our Internet PC team answered another 81 e-mail messages. A new reader commented, "If I did not know better, I would say that *The Good News* was from the Worldwide Church of God under Mr. Herbert Armstrong! Is there any connection?" As always, we fielded a variety of questions ranging from the serious to the absurd.

Some of the counseling situations that we dealt with this month include how to cope with an alcoholic spouse who is on a drinking binge and another marriage problem involving a longtime abuse situation. We received what appeared to be a suicide note posted on our Web site; we wrote to the individual in the hopes of reaching him, but we have not heard back.

One *GN* subscriber complained about a statement in the magazine on abortion being murder and asked about pregnancy due to rape or incest, as well as when a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother. A man anxious for baptism asked if it would be all right if he has his neighbor baptize him in the local river. A reader asked if something significant about the Beast would happen on June 6 of this year, because “06-06-06” includes “666.”

It was a big month for people attempting to convert others, including one man who wanted advice on doing a better job of preaching to his friends, because he keeps losing them the way he is talking to them. Another announced that he is looking forward to launching into a career of teaching the book of Revelation, once he gets it down pat from our literature. A reader who believes God healed her wants our counsel on how to establish a “healing church.” Another reader related that he had told a family member her church was lying to her about the crucifixion-resurrection chronology; we suggested to him that he might be coming across a little too forcefully!

After receiving a letter from us that mentioned the connection between Easter and paganism, a reader wrote that we need to change our outlook and become more cheerful. She argued that the symbolism of Easter is only dark because our perception is dark. Other than that, she thinks we’re doing a good job!

We received three letters about anti-Christ literature, including *The Jesus Papers*, *The Gospel of Judas* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Occasionally, we receive requests for information that have no apparent connection with our message, such as one that we had this month asking how nomads make their tents. Another subscriber wanted to hire someone from the UCG (but did not say what the job entails). And, sometimes we wonder how well people are paying attention, such as one person who has received much of our literature, who asked if we would say that our beliefs are the same as those of the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Lastly, we received a remarkable inquiry via the Internet from a new person in Saudi Arabia. If he persists, he might find it extremely difficult to practice Christianity there.

Cecil Maranville

Vertical Thought Personal Correspondence

For the month of April, the *Vertical Thought* PC staff received a total of 46 messages. Among the more interesting were these: One young person wrote a couple of letters regarding the laws that were given to Israel, trying to understand why we believe the Church today should keep them (Sabbath, Holy Days, clean and unclean meats and so forth). She is struggling with the concept of the Church being spiritual Israel versus the things she considers to be Jewish.

An ardent pet-lover wanted to know what happens to our pets when they die—will we ever see them again? Another person is searching for the exact meaning of the number 666 as recorded in Revelation.

Tom Clark