

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

Home Office Update July 6, 2006

Having just returned from a family reunion, Mr. Kilough's update will be included in next month's Home Office Update.

MINISTERIAL SERVICES

Sharron and I just returned from a trip to South Florida and Georgia. While on this trip we attended the regional conference for the pastors in the Southeast region in Atlanta, Georgia. It was very good to return to the location of my first ministerial assignment and the area where Sharron grew up and attended Church for many years. During the conference I was again struck by the dedication and enthusiasm we see in our pastors.

As some may have already heard, I have asked Richard Thompson to replace Dennis Luker on the Ministerial Services Team. The current Ministerial Services Team along with our president, Clyde Kilough, reviewed a list of possible replacements before selecting Richard Thompson. For six out of the 11 years of United, Mr. Luker has served as both a regional pastor and a member of the Ministerial Services Team. Mr. Luker has done a remarkable job juggling both assignments (not to mention that he was also on the Council during some of these years). As of July 1, he stepped down from the team, but is continuing as the regional pastor for the Northwest. Mr. Thompson will continue to pastor Orlando, Ocala and Jacksonville, Florida, in addition to his duties in Ministerial Services. This will leave Mr. Luker with *only* two jobs—Church pastor and regional pastor! I sincerely want to thank Denny and LeeAnn Luker for their contribution to the Ministerial Services Team for the past several years. And I want to welcome Mr. Thompson back to our team. He served on the original team back in 1995. By adding him, our team now consists of David Register (Education Program director), Doug Horchak (overall coordinator for Festival planning) and Mr. Thompson.

Another change in job assignment will involve David Baker. On July 1, 2006, Mr. Baker officially took on the responsibility of senior pastor for Asia. This is an area that stretches from the Philippines through Shanghai and Hong Kong, China, on to Singapore, Malaysia, throughout the southeast Asian countries of Thailand and Myanmar and all the way around to Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. We haven't even completely defined the territory for his new assignment, but whenever you use the term *Asia*, you immediately know that it will include a large area. Previously, Mr. Baker has been pastoring our congregations in Buffalo and Elmira, New York. Scott Lord became the pastor of these two congregations effective July 1. He and his wife have been living in Upstate New York for several years, and Mr. Lord has been full time in the ministry for the past two years.

We have one more new job assignment that I want to make you aware of as well. We currently have three senior pastors from the United States assigned to Africa—Fred Kellers is the senior pastor for Nigeria, Melvin Rhodes is the senior pastor for Ghana and John Elliott is the senior pastor for Kenya and East Africa. We have known for some time that these men can easily wear themselves out traveling to these distant areas four times a year. We have slowly been adding associate senior pastors to take some of the pressure off the need for them to travel so extensively. Two years ago we assigned Mark Mickelson as the associate to the senior pastor in Nigeria. Mr. Mickelson travels twice a year to Nigeria to assist Mr. Kellers with this area. I am happy to announce that we are now adding Tom Clark as the associate to Mr. Rhodes in Ghana. Mr. Clark just returned from his first trip to Ghana, and we are grateful that he enjoyed it and has accepted the new job responsibility, so effective July 1, Mr. Clark became the new associate senior pastor for Ghana. Now we need to work on finding help for Mr. Elliott in East Africa. We truly appreciate all of these men and their wives for the tireless example of dedication they are setting. It isn't easy making these trips multiple times per year and traveling into remote and desolate areas of the world to visit with the brethren. In addition they all continue to pastor congregations here in the United States.

Jim Franks

Ambassador Bible Center Update

We are now only six weeks from ABC graduation, and we have a number of year-end activities planned, including a Hawaiian-themed dance, faculty barbecues, a scholarship fund-raiser for international UCG students, ABC Chorale Sabbath trips and graduation weekend activities. It is a very busy time of the year for ABC!

We have now accepted 41 students for ABC next year, and we have received several additional applications that are currently being processed. 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. This may be the first year that we will have more applicants than space in our classroom. We view this as a very positive trend that we feel will continue into the future.

David Register

Education Task Force Update

The Education Advisory Task Force met in the Los Angeles, California, area on Saturday evening, June 24, and Sunday, June 25, for a discussion about the Church's education programs. The task force is made up of elders and members who have experience and background in education and several of our current education programs. The purpose of the meeting was to brainstorm ideas and suggestions for the overall structure of the education area and outcomes for our education programs.

The task force unanimously agreed that outcomes need to be formulated for each area of education so benchmarks may be put in place to measure our progress and growth against our stated outcomes. The task force worked hard to recommend an overall outcome model for our education programs.

We made considerable progress in formulating recommendations that will be presented to the president and the operation manager of Ministerial Services. After review and editing, recommendations will be brought forward in a proposal to the Council of Elders at their August meeting.

David Register

Biblical Tour of Turkey

Currently, there are still five spaces available for those wanting to attend the Biblical Tour of Turkey during the Feast of Tabernacles. If you are interested, please call (970) 484-5878 or send an e-mail to USFestival@ucg.org.

Charles Melear

Costa Rica Feast Site

The Costa Rica Feast site on the Pacific coast still has room for 100 transfers. Visit www.unidaelsalvador.org/feast or call Barbara Parada at (713) 647-2693 for information and to register. The price is \$100 per day per adult and \$50 per day per child and includes all meals and lodging.

Charles Melear

Personal Correspondence

We had 201 letters go out from Personal Correspondence last month—87 by surface mail and 114 e-mails. Here's an overview.

We had a higher than usual number of prayer requests, including several about serious financial trials. One was from a relocated Hurricane Katrina victim in need of employment. Two others faced a failed business, poor health and overall financial ruin. Still another was discouraged, fearing that God was not hearing his prayers because of increasingly severe financial woes. By the way, none of these people asked for money, but only support through prayer.

After reading our publications and becoming convicted about the need to be a part of the true Church, a subscriber told us that he believes he needs to found a “primitive Christian organization.” He solicited our advice on how to go about it. We suggested that he did not need to do so at all—and that he shouldn’t! A subscriber asked when the fallen spirits of Genesis 6, 2 Peter 2, Jude and Revelation are going to return. We explained they never left!

And in the difficult to answer category, a person angered by the actions of relatives claiming to be Christians demanded that we explain why they are behaving the way they are. The family is not part of the UCG; the person apparently wrote to us simply because he perceives us to be a Christian organization. A subscriber who is also a *Bible Study Course* graduate, as well as a coworker, asked if we actually believe Christ will return. He urged us to stop saying that Christ is coming again.

A subscriber asked if our organization ever observed Sunday, before changing to the Sabbath day. Another wanted to know why we do not have any women on the UCG board (Council of Elders).

A number of people asked for ordination this month, as well as about receiving training to become ministers. We received five visit requests from inmates who are relatively new subscribers, so we offered to work with them through this department for the present.

Quite a few questions came in by e-mail due to a statement in Don Hooser’s article, “*The Da Vinci Code, Christianity and the Bible.*” The statement, “Please be aware that the Bible teaches that there are only two members of the divine God family—God the Father and Jesus Christ—and they are always referred to with the masculine gender” troubled, confused, upset or simply stirred wonder in some since the Holy Spirit was not included as a member of the God family.

Some wrote in to ask for our help after hearing things at their church with which they didn’t agree. One asked: “Can someone speak in tongues without the leading of the Holy Spirit? Is it proper for one’s pastor to ask the entire congregation to speak in tongues at the same time?” Another wrote, “Our preacher is teaching that God created other people along with Adam and Eve but did not put them in the garden. Is this true?”

A few wrote in about their struggles with, but desires for, repentance. Dealing with what was a “sinful young life” of cohabitation, one asked for guidance and mentioned, “I really don’t want to disobey God and I don’t believe He conforms to us—we conform to His will.” Another, after thanking the Church for all she has learned from our publications, wrote, “The problem is now, how am I going to change my life, meaning from the traditional Christian way to what is God’s way?”

One gentleman wrote in a somewhat surprising challenge: “I found it interesting at your Web site that you refer to the Ten Commandments as being commands rather than suggestions, and yet you completely ignore the Fourth Commandment. How do you do this?” After learning that we do keep the Sabbath, he again challenged us by stating we were doing so on the wrong day. Then, when he found that we do keep the seventh-day Sabbath, he apologized and admitted that he had put his foot in his mouth, and that it didn’t taste good.

And then a Muslim, studying fundamental beliefs of Christianity, somehow chose us to answer some of His questions, including the difference between the Old and New Testaments, what the 14th of Abib is on the “in vogue” calendar, and also how the “son of God” can recommend wine for Passover, since wine is taboo in almost all of the divine religions.

Here is a sampling of the variety of Bible questions we answered:

- If God knew that Adam and Eve would eat the forbidden fruit, wasn’t He setting them up to fail?
- Explain “let the dead bury their dead.”
- Where was Jesus between the ages of 12 and 30?
- Did John the Baptist truly doubt the divinity of Christ?
- A large number of animals (who cannot sin) have to suffer such terrible, terrible physical pain before death ... Doesn’t God love them?
- What does the Word say about tattoos?

Cecil Maranville and David Evans

Vertical Thought Personal Correspondence

In the month of June, the *Vertical Thought* PCD team fielded 38 questions from young people around the world. Many of the questions we receive seem to come from individuals who are very new in the faith, or perhaps are just coming into contact with the Church. It is therefore interesting to see the depth of their thinking and the seriousness of their questions when they write. In one letter the writer was very concerned about the unpardonable sin and whether or not he had committed it. Two people asked questions about keeping the Sabbath, including one from West Africa who wanted more information on which types of employment would or would not be compatible with Sabbath keeping. Another letter came in asking about a somewhat obscure New Age religion called Eckankar, which he has apparently come in contact with on a college campus.

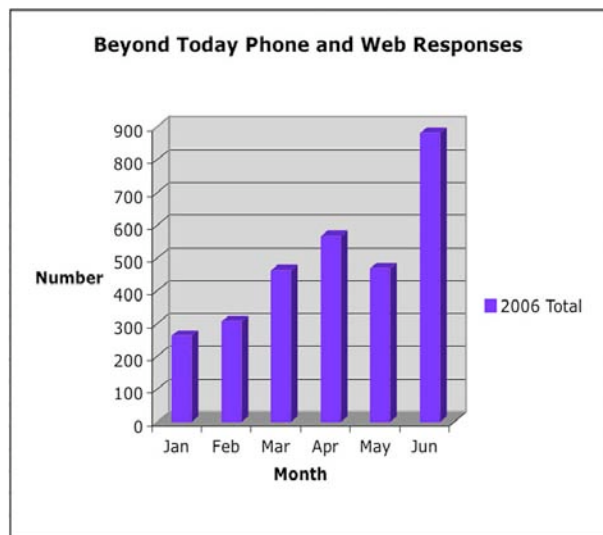
One individual asked if a Christian is able to defend himself against an armed attacker even if it meant taking the life of the attacker. What made this question even more poignant is that he lives in a part of the world where the value of a human life is often quite low, and the level of violence is rather high—making it perhaps more likely that he could face just such a situation.

But perhaps the most touching letter this month came from a teen born into a Muslim family and living in a Muslim country. After discovering Christianity and deciding to convert, she has been under tremendous pressure from her parents, family and friends. There have even been threats of violence and dire physical consequences if she refuses to once again become a good Muslim. Regrettably, we know from news and other sources that in many Muslim-controlled areas it is illegal to convert from Islam, and the consequences for doing so can range from severe censure to physical violence and even death. The best we can do in a case like this is offer encouragement and point to the hope of the coming Kingdom of God when problems like this will be no more.

Tom Clark

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Beyond Today Responses Continue to Rise



Literature requests in response to airings of *Beyond Today* on cable-access television and the Internet continue to show a very good increase overall from month to month. Tabulations for the month of June are almost 900 for the month (881)—basically nearly double what we received in May! The adjacent graph gives a very good snapshot of results so far. It's a very encouraging trend to date with over 3,000 *Good News* subscriptions generated and booklets mailed!

Peter Eddington

Feast of Tabernacles Sermon Video

Clay Thornton (senior video producer) and Peter Eddington (Media and Communications Services operation manager) traveled to Australia and New Zealand June 13 through 26 to record material for this year's Feast of Tabernacles sermon video to be titled: "Life Anew in a New Land." The 2006 Feast sermon video will have three main sections. These will include a special focus about the brethren and the work in Australia and New Zealand; a Feast sermon message from Australian minister Stephen Clark; and a message from President Clyde Kilough on the major accomplishments of the past year and our goals for the future—looking forward to God's Kingdom: a "life anew in a new land."

The video will feature an inspirational message of confident hope for the future civilization that God's people envision—a spiritual freedom in a new society led by Jesus Christ. It will exhort our brethren to continue fighting the good fight of faith in their daily lives as they await Christ's return and the establishing of that life anew in a new land—similar to Abraham's quest outlined in Hebrews 11:10-16. The sermon portion by Mr. Clark will draw an analogy between the coming of the new civilization of God to this earth and the new civilization that the early Australians forged as they sought freedom in a new land. An overview of the trip can be viewed as part of this week's Compass Check at www.ucg.org/about/homeoffice/compasscheck.htm. Cities visited included Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

Peter Eddington

13 Million Households Targeted in Good News Print Advertising for 2006-2007

A vigorous *Good News* print advertising campaign is planned for the new fiscal year. Nearly 13.3 million households will be reached through direct mail and "take one" brochures, resulting in over 100,000 new *Good News* subscribers.

As a part of this new effort, brethren will have the opportunity to distribute two newly designed trifold subscription brochures. One brochure will feature a cover photo of a lion and lamb with the headline "Will Our World Ever See Lasting Peace?" The second covers a topic that always receives a high response, "What Happens After Death?"

A major component of our advertising plan will be the placement of inserts in 24 card pack co-op mailers. Over 9 million U.S. households will be reached, resulting in thousands of new *Good News* subscribers.

Beginning in September, an updated bifold subscription brochure titled "Are You Prepared to Teach Values?" will be sent to 2.75 million first-time mothers by means of American Baby, Inc. co-op mailers. Also, in January 2007, a test distribution of 500,000 *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* brochures will be conducted. These brochures will be inserted in *American Baby's* "Parents-Healthy Kids" sampling pack to be distributed at pediatrician's offices.

Also, beginning in October 2006, we plan to distribute 721,000 bifold "take one" subscription brochures on 4,500 "Good Neighbor" displays located in major supermarket and discount stores across the United States. Our four-color brochures will feature the following titles: *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*, *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* and *Managing Your Finances*. Samples of these new brochures will be sent to all elders for display at Sabbath services.

As always, your prayers for a successful print advertising campaign will be much appreciated.

John LaBissoniere