

# United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough  
Chairman

Roy Holladay  
President

## Home Office Update July 29, 2004

Dear Brethren,

It's been wonderful to see the amount of local congregation support for various evangelistic efforts over the past year! There are several ways that pastors and brethren have been instrumental in the work of spreading the truth of God and the good news of His Kingdom. Here are just a few that have been done of late:

- Congregations are sponsoring cable-access television programming in dozens of cities across the country. Both the *Tomorrow* and *Good News* television programs are on 50-plus stations each.
- Earlier in the year many congregations helped advertise our *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* booklet in local newspapers. This really helped us raise people's awareness of this material, contributing to the best release of a new booklet we have had to date.
- Some pastors regularly write for their local newspaper's religious editorial sections, providing the truth of God to the community, and bringing the work of the Church into the public eye.
- Some congregations are sponsoring the *Good News* radio program in their area—helping to increase the coverage this important program offers.
- A most encouraging effort is taking place at the local congregation level across the United States. Thirty-six of United's pastors (representing about 90 congregations), are regularly reaching out to our *Good News* readers with various offers!

These pastors and their congregations are currently involved in writing letters to *Good News* subscribers in their areas. At the home office we're encouraging ministers to write once or twice a year to *Good News* readers who have been on file for at least two years. The home office provides copyediting for the letters and also provides the addresses. It is important that a fresh list of addresses be provided by the home office each time a letter is written.

For example, Dave Mills, pastor in Asheboro, Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina, mailed a letter this month to 2,400 *GN* subscribers in his area who have been on our file for at least two years. (This is an increase of more than 1,200 over the letters mailed at this time last year! He was pleasantly surprised to see such an increase in two-year-plus subscribers in his region!) These are readers who have had to renew their subscription and are possibly more motivated than some. In the offer, Mr. Mills invites the readers to a special sermon on a captivating subject that he hopes will interest the subscribers in his region, and also offers them an audiotape of the message if they are unable to attend personally.

Mr. Mills highlighted the benefits of the program in a message he wrote at this time last year: "In July [2003], we mailed 1,175 letters to *Good News* subscribers in the Asheboro, Charlotte and Raleigh church areas, offering them a tape or to come to hear the sermon 'The Church Jesus Built.' To date I have received 108 requests for the sermon tape, and seven people came to hear the sermon in person. That's a combined total of 115—a 9.8 percent response. I also received several phone calls expressing interest in the Church. One person has returned to additional services in the Raleigh area.

"Overall, I feel good about the watering of the seed. It establishes contact with our subscribers in this area, informs them of a minister in their area and that a local congregation is near to them. As God provides the increase, I believe we will see fruit down the road."

This is now the fourth summer that David Mills' congregations have made sermon tape offers. He hopes the congregations in his area will be able to continue to do so in the years ahead.

The Church spends considerable resources getting and keeping subscribers to our various publications. At the local level, the brethren can be involved by reaching out to some of our more interested readers, like these dozens of congregations already are doing. There are several ways that local pastors can use the "evangelism" line on their monthly church subsidy form to reach these *Good News* subscribers. As mentioned above, readers can be invited to special presentations and sermons, offered audiotapes, given information about where a United congregation is near them, etc.

We would like to see more congregations participating in such "local evangelism" efforts whenever they are able. If pastors would like to see sample letters from other congregations' efforts, please let Peter Eddington know at the home office and we'll help you do a mailing in your area!

Please take time to read the rest of this longer-than-usual "Home Office Update." There has certainly been much going on in the work of the Church these past few months—as you'll see. It is very encouraging!

*Roy Holladay*

### **ANNOUNCEMENT: UCG Winter Family Weekend**

*(Pastors: Please announce this in your congregations, and make copies of the attached information flyer available on the information table. Thank you.)*

Response to this year's UCG Winter Family Weekend has been very enthusiastic, and we are again looking forward to a great event. Information flyers are available today on the information table. These will provide you with more details—as well as Web site addresses and phone numbers. At the price of \$30 per night, rooms for the Clarion Hotel are being booked quickly. In fact, hotel management tells us that 226 of the 390 rooms have already been reserved. Suites are no longer available but king and standard rooms are, although nonsmoking rooms are going fast.

The next step in our planning process is to find out from families, young adults and teens what you would like to see in this weekend. We have received much input so far, and we certainly had many great activities in the past. However, we are very interested in knowing what improvements and updates all participants—young and old—would like to see in order to make this event as beneficial and enjoyable as possible.

To this end, we have developed three (3) online surveys—one for families, one for teenagers and one for young adults—to gather your input. Please refer to the information flyer on accessing these surveys or go to [www.ucg.org/familyweekend](http://www.ucg.org/familyweekend). **We need your recommendations within the next three weeks.** Your input will greatly help us in determining what to offer this year—be it activities we have had in the past, or new activities. Your help is much appreciated. After we have compiled the results of the surveys, we will finalize the package of activities, sports, seminars and classes and send out a complete packet to all participants. We will then open an online and a mail-in registration process (after the Feast of Tabernacles), where each participant can sign-up for his or her activities of choice. If you have any questions, please contact Mark Winner at [mark\\_winner@ucg.org](mailto:mark_winner@ucg.org).

*Roy Holladay/Mark Winner*

### **Advertisements Focusing on Young Families Prove Successful**

In March 2004 a print advertising test using an *American Baby* magazine cooperative mailing program was conducted. Copies of our newly designed, highly targeted, bifold "mother and baby hands" subscription brochures were included in their "Especially for Mothers" mailing package. These brochures were sent to 155,000 first-time mothers whose median age was 29. With subscription requests still

arriving, we have already received 2,130 responses for an excellent 1.3 percent response, at a very good \$4.91 cost per response.

Also, earlier this year our new “teaching values” double postcard was mailed to 150,000 homeschooling families. This highly targeted advertising piece, which reached heads-of-household with a medium age of 38, has performed extremely well. We recorded a 2.5 percent response at an excellent cost per response of just 80 cents. The message in this new brochure encouraged over 3,700 people to become *Good News* subscribers. It certainly pays to test new graphics and ad copy.

Finally, beginning in May 2004, we began distribution of 329,000 copies of two new *Good News* subscription brochures on Good Neighbor “take-one” displays located in over 3,000 major supermarkets and discount stores in 46 states. These stores included Wal-Mart, Kroger, Meijer, Shop Rite and many others located in large and small communities. The brochures featured the themes, “Why Does God Allow Suffering?” and “Feeling Overwhelmed?” With cards still arriving, the “Why Suffering?” brochure has produced over double the response of the “Feeling Overwhelmed?” brochure. Whenever possible it is important to conduct side-by-side comparisons of various advertising brochures. This helps determine the relative effectiveness of various creative pieces.

*John LaBissoniere*

### **Good News Print Advertising Planned for 2004-2005 Fiscal Year**

For the current 2004-2005 fiscal year, our print advertising model calls for reaching over 4.6 million households with the expectation of adding over 42,000 new *Good News* subscriptions. To prepare for this effort, we have designed seven brand-new 3 1/2-by-5 1/2-inch card pack inserts. These four-color, postage-paid postcards, which cost less than 2 cents each to produce and mail, will advertise booklets and offer a subscription to *The Good News*. By testing a number of new creative pieces we expect to quickly find out which subjects will draw the greatest interest. The new advertisements include offers for the following booklets: *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, *What Happens After Death?*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*, *Heaven and Hell—What Does the Bible Really Teach?* and *Creation or Evolution—Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

Although the number of targeted households for print advertising will be reduced from 7.5 million last fiscal year to 4.6 million this year, we expect to significantly change the demographic dynamic by generally targeting a younger audience. In fact, our 2004-2005 promotions model calls for greatly expanding use of an *American Baby* magazine cooperative mailing package. Our newly designed, highly targeted bifold “mother and baby hands” subscription brochure will be included in their “Especially for Mothers” co-op mailer. These attractive brochures will be mailed to 1,400,000 first-time mothers whose median age is 29. Through this effort, we expect to add close to 17,000 new young families to our subscription file.

Finally, we plan to design and print two new “take-one” subscription brochures for member distribution in various congregations. We are also arranging to conduct a three-month campaign to distribute over 325,000 of two new *Good News* “take-one” brochures in over 3,000 supermarkets and discount stores throughout the United States. As always, your diligent prayers are requested for the success of these critical evangelistic efforts.

*John LaBissoniere*

### **Good News Radio Program Reaches Fourth Anniversary**

In August, we will celebrate the fourth anniversary of the *Good News* radio program. Since the first program aired in 2000, host Gary Petty and guests have recorded 93 of the 27-minute broadcasts. Over 10,000 responses have been received in four years, with an average of 49 responses received per program.

The top 10 programs for response are currently the following:

1. Death, Then What?
2. Has God Abandoned the Jews?, part 1
3. What Happens After Death?
4. The Ten Commandments
5. 4,000 Years of Christmas
6. What Happened to the Lost Tribes?
7. Recipe for a Happy Marriage, part 1
8. Ghouls, Ghosts, Goblins and Halloween
9. Will I Go to Heaven?
10. Has God Abandoned the Jews?, part 2

The broadcast presently airs on 11 stations. The top five response-producing stations are currently:

1. WBEN, Buffalo, New York.
2. WWL, New Orleans, Louisiana.
3. WIBC, Indianapolis, Indiana.
4. KCMO, Kansas City, Kansas.
5. WFLA, Orlando, Florida.

The recognition of this anniversary wouldn't be complete without thanking our faithful radio program monitors for their weekly service in monitoring the broadcast on the stations in their areas.

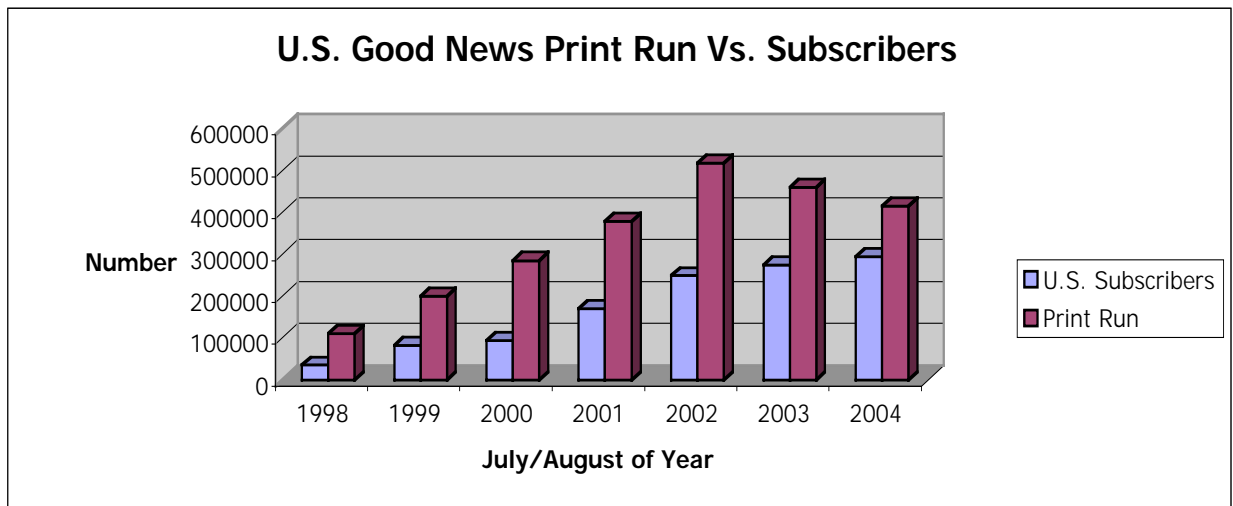
*John LaBissoniere/Peter Eddington*

### **Good News Subscriptions Continue to Rise**

The total print quantity of the July/August 2004 *Good News* magazine was 414,896. While this is less than our highest print run of 526,173 reached for the September/October 2002 issue, there is an encouraging trend—the number of actual “subscribers” is continuing to rise. Over the past two years we have made a concerted effort in the United States to replace waiting room program and newsstand program copies with actual subscribers. We have dropped more than 100,000 waiting room copies and more than 55,000 newsstand copies. Having actual subscribers’ addresses on file gives us greater opportunity to directly communicate with our readers with various offers and updates—something impossible to do with the publicly displayed copies.

Now that we have gleaned our print run in this manner, we expect to see our overall circulation rise back toward the 500,000 mark as our advertising efforts get underway this fiscal year. We still have 6,300 waiting room copies being displayed in the United States (plus another 5,000 in Canada), and 21,000 newsstand copies. Putting less-expensive advertising brochures and subscription offers on display in public venues is proving to be less expensive than tens of thousands of actual copies of the magazine itself. The following chart and bar graph show the growth of *GN* magazine subscribers over the past eight year’s July/August issue.

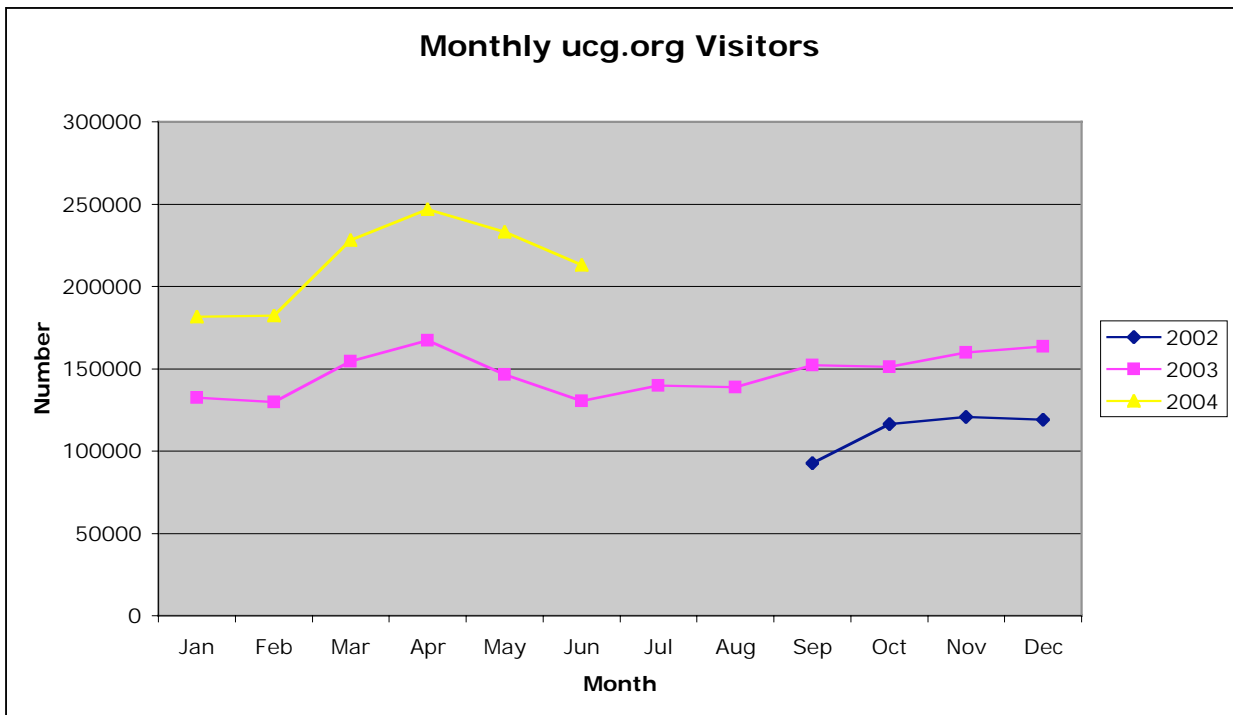
<b>July/August Issue of Year</b>	<b>Print Run</b>	<b>U.S. Subscribers</b>
1997	58,829	
1998	109,874	35,000
1999	199,837	81,919
2000	284,582	93,290
2001	378,066	170,893
2002	517,791	249,364
2003	460,167	274,254
2004	414,896	293,057



*Peter Eddington*

### Internet Literature Requests Soar

Requests for the *GN* magazine and other literature during the 2003-2004 fiscal year totaled 122,827 through our Web sites (an increase of 133 percent over last fiscal year!). Of course, these are all in addition to those many requests received by snail mail! The Internet is proving to be a valuable and cost-effective tool for the Church to use. Please continue to pray that our development and success in this media will grow and become even more fruitful. In addition, please see the encouraging chart below that shows the number of monthly visitors to [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) over the past 22 months. The upward trend is very exciting! We almost reached a quarter of a million visitors for April 2004!



Also, our advertising at [Overture.com](http://Overture.com) is still working very well. We receive new subscribers for around \$1.75 each, and these are usually people who have browsed our Web site and who understand fairly well the type of literature they will receive. Overture is also partnering with many other major search engines on the Internet, and so our keyword listings appear in several places. In addition, we do

receive thousands of new *GN* subscribers each year at no cost. These are people who sign up for the *GN* after finding our Web site through various search engines, from TV ads, radio ads, etc.

Every time someone fills out an online literature request, we ask the person two questions. We've found that only 1 percent of respondents are Church members. Therefore, 99 percent of those requesting literature are not in United! Also, a referral from a friend comprises 18 to 22 percent of responses. The most common answer to "How did you find out about UCG?" is that the user saw an advertisement on the Web (37 percent).

*Peter Eddington*

### **Market Test of First-Contact Brochures on US Campuses Unsuccessful**

From February through May 2004, a total of 50,000 "first-contact" promotional brochures were test-marketed on 50 university and college campuses in six Midwestern states. This included 25,000 copies of "Sex Outside of Marriage: What's the Big Deal?" and 25,000 copies of "The Debt Trap: How Do I Get Free?" Each brochure included a business-reply card so interested readers could subscribe to both *The Good News* and *Vertical Thought* magazines by simply dropping the card in the mail.

These new brochures, which were similar to other advertising pieces yet with more content, were designed to summarize a single facet of the gospel. The objective was to grab a reader's attention to encourage him or her to want to learn more. Unfortunately, subscriber response to this test showed that these particular brochures did not perform well. Results also indicate that the college-age market is difficult to reach. Only a handful of responses were received.

*John LaBissoniere*

### **Market Test of First-Contact Brochures Via Members Produces Marginal Results**

During the same period when the university "first-contact" brochure distribution test was underway, 10,000 copies of "The Debt Trap" promotional brochure were also distributed as "take-ones" by our brethren in various congregations. Although response was significantly better than the university test, this effort has not, so far, produced equal or better results than other subscription brochures previously tested. We will continue to monitor residual response to help determine the course of possible future efforts using "first-contact" brochures.

*John LaBissoniere*

### **Media Center Fund Beginning to See Contributions**

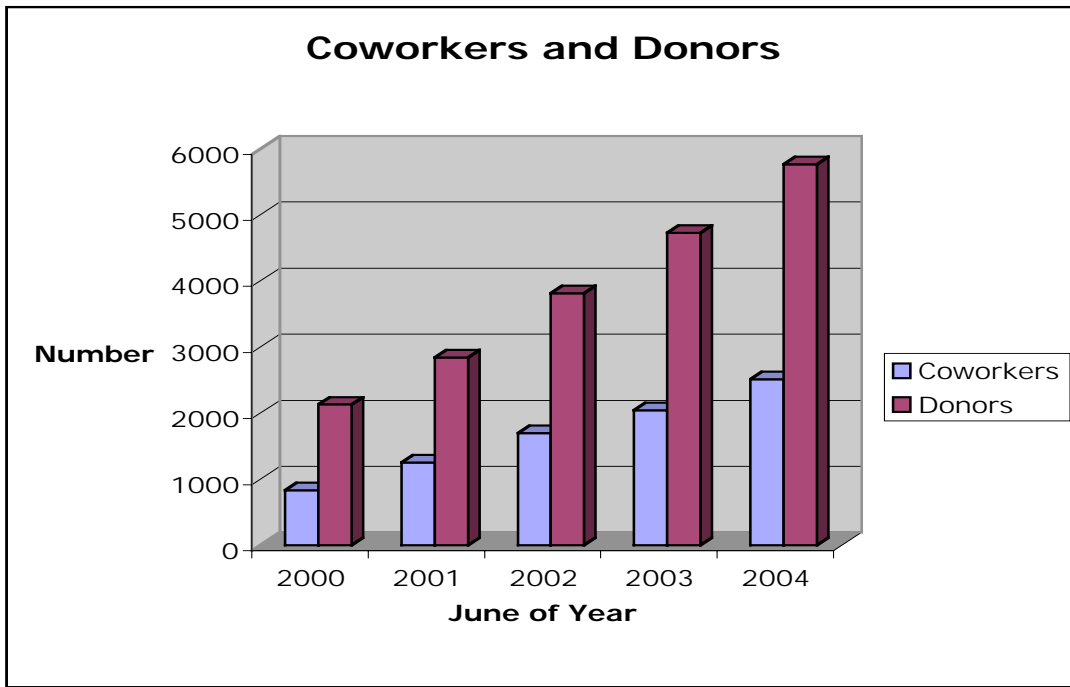
Over the past week we have begun to see contributions arrive for the proposed home office media center. Soon we'll provide regular updates on the fund's progress in *United News* for you. Thank you very much to those who have already started to help in this regard.

*Peter Eddington*

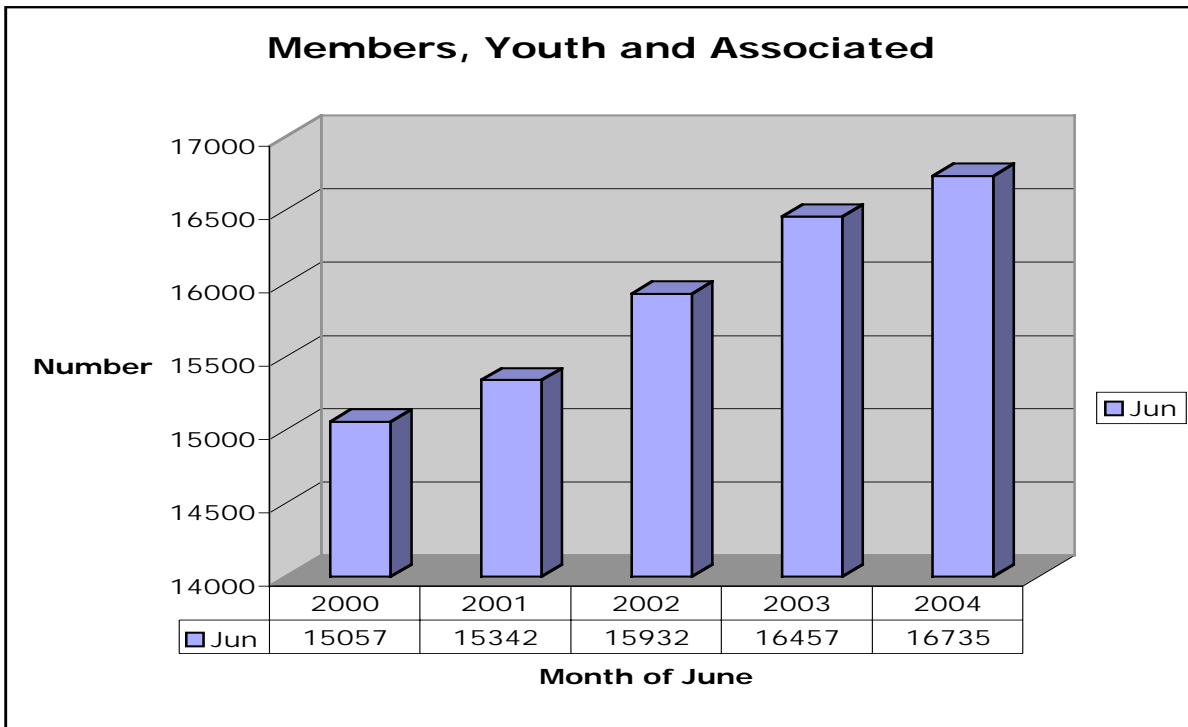
### **Members, Coworkers and Donors**

Reports show that about 8 percent of United's income has come from those people who do not consider themselves part of UCG. We currently have 5,768 donors and 2,513 coworkers on our file. It is very encouraging to see a continued increase from year to year in the number of people who want to contribute to the work of the Church!

Please continue to pray that God will send forth *more* laborers to assist with the massive work of preaching the gospel of His Kingdom around the globe. At this time, many of our readers may not make a lifetime commitment to the truth as baptized members, but as in year's past, God can use coworkers and donors to play a key role in providing resources for the work of the Church.



Following is a table that shows the number of people in the United States who say they are members of, or associated with, the United Church of God. This includes our baptized members, our teens and preteens and those who attend with us and consider themselves part of United (for example, unbaptized young adults who are no longer on our “youth” listing but yet to be baptized). There has been a steady increase over the past five years, with 16,735 in June of 2004 compared with 15,057 in June of 2000 (an 11 percent increase).



*Peter Eddington*

## **Read Current “World News and Trends” Every Day**

With so much happening so quickly in today’s world, how can you keep up? We want to remind you of two features on our Web site to help people follow Christ’s instruction in Luke 21:36 to watch world events—and to help make sense of all that’s happening.

Scott Ashley and Tom Robinson review dozens of news sources every day to bring you what’s truly important. Inspired by our *Good News* magazine feature “World News and Trends,” the “Current World News and Trends” Web feature ([www.ucg.org/worldnews](http://www.ucg.org/worldnews)) is updated several times a week with links to important news stories from around the world—many that are, at least in a general way, related to Bible prophecy. At the end of the week you’ll find the articles archived by major subjects and regions of the world to make browsing simpler. Some members have made the “Current World News and Trends” Web page their own “personal start page” that opens first when starting their Internet browser. This is one way to keep abreast of important news!

Please make a point to visit [www.ucg.org/worldnews](http://www.ucg.org/worldnews) to find links to the most important world news and trends from across the globe or scroll down in the right-hand column on our home page where you’ll see a convenient link to the “Current World News and Trends” section—right below our “Compass Check” video feature.

Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit [www.ucg.org/commentary](http://www.ucg.org/commentary) for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world. To expedite viewing of this important material, this weekly feature on current events (written by our ministers and editors), is right in the middle of the home page. This will help our site to remain relevant in the face of major breaking stories.

*Aaron Booth*

## **UCG E-mail Update Utilities Show Significant Growth**

It is encouraging to see significant growth in new people signing up to receive our weekly “UCG Web Site” updates and “UCG Member” updates. We currently have 9,135 subscribers to our [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) Web site updates, a 50 percent increase over the past six months. This service provides our users with the latest new items on our site. Approximately 120 new people are signing up each week!

In addition, there are 8,005 people receiving UCG Member updates, which gives our members updates of Church news and other important developments. You can sign up for either service today by simply going to our Web site at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) or visiting our updates page at <http://www.ucg.org/contact/updates.htm>.

Of interest to our teens and young adults is the *Vertical Thought* magazine e-mail update that alerts them to new material posted at [www.verticalthought.org](http://www.verticalthought.org) and links to new material as it becomes available. We have 1,018 current subscribers to this service.

A very exciting development is the number of *Good News* readers who are now signed up to receive our monthly “GN Reader e-Letter.” Eleven weeks ago we had 582 subscribers to these special letters from Mr. Holladay. At present we now have 9,647—very encouraging indeed. Samples of what our *Good News* readers have been getting can be seen at [www.gnmagazine.org/gnupdate](http://www.gnmagazine.org/gnupdate).

*Michelle de Campos*