

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Home Office Update January 20, 2005

Dear Brethren,

Even though we are in the middle of January, many of us in the home office are starting to anticipate a special event for the United Church of God—our 10th anniversary, which takes place this spring. We will have more information about what has been accomplished in the coming months, but it is interesting and exciting to see how far we have come—thanks to God’s blessing and mercy—in that short time. Of course, hopefully this initial decade will simply be a springboard to greater and better things in the future, according to God’s will and direction.

From the beginning of United, one of the core values that was emphasized was *working together*. We did not simply want to be small, isolated groups, but rather a larger unit with the energy, effectiveness and efficiency that this brings. In my letter here, I would like to emphasize two aspects of this concept: first, that we are an *international association*, and second, *brethren working together with the employees* to accomplish even more in our biblical mission.

Beginning with this issue of the *Home Office Update*, we hope to begin bringing a report or two from areas outside of the United States. In this update, we have a report from Canada. In the coming months, we would like to invite other non-U.S. regions to send in reports about special events or developments in their areas. We will try to feature a couple of these in each update.

The participation of so many hundreds of our brethren around the world in many projects of the Church has contributed in a huge way to the momentum that we have enjoyed. In the area of preaching the gospel, the volunteer hours have been numerous indeed. I would briefly like to remind everyone about the next project we have—brochures advertising our booklets.

There is still a need for U.S. brethren to help distribute three new advertising brochures. These eye-catching “take-one” advertisements contain the following themes: *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. These brochures offer potential readers the booklets by the same titles and a subscription to *The Good News*.

So far, 75 new brethren have joined. Also, in the past couple of weeks a total of 25,730 brochures and 462 displays have been sent to both these new people and to others who have already been participating. We still have nearly 50,000 brochures in inventory, so we have a good capacity to handle more requests.

How does the program work? You will be sent a supply of brochures and small, attractive, clear acrylic display units. All you need to do is locate stores and shops in your community that are willing to display the units on countertops, vending machines or other locations as a free customer service. Once a display is placed, just return to the store periodically to restock. That’s all there is to it! You can order additional supplies anytime. For more information please contact John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org, or by phone (toll free) at (888) 369-9940 Sunday to Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST.

As we approach our 10th anniversary, let us be sure to humbly thank and praise our Father for His blessings, and ask Him for His direct intervention as we move forward from here.

Roy Holladay

Canadian Report

In Canada we received a record-shattering 13,766 pieces of mail in the last calendar year. This number is up substantially from the previous record of 9,743 set in 2003. The biggest jump was in literature and subscription requests from our Web sites. They more than doubled last year as compared to the preceding year and accounted for almost 24 percent of the total amount of mail received in 2004.

You will be pleased to learn that during 2004 the Church in Canada sent out 173,266 letters, periodicals, publications, tapes and other related items. This is considerably higher than the 141,533 pieces we sent out in 2003! Subscribers to *Bonnes Nouvelles* have almost tripled during 2004. We are still processing the income for 2004, but will have a report in a few weeks.

Here are a few excerpts from letters recently received at the Canadian National Office. As always, they are enlightening and enable us to see the “pearl of great price” through the eyes of those in whom the awe of discovery is still strong.

“I just received the November-December issue of *The Good News*. Your magazine is very informative, awesome . . . Please send me the booklet called *The Ten Commandments* . . . I enjoy your magazine very much. There are a lot of good stories and advice for survival.” B. L., Sechelt, British Columbia

“I have been a subscriber to your magazine for some time now, and wish to take the time to say thank you for providing this subscription free of charge. Your magazine has been really helpful in many unanswered questions I have had. I would also like to receive your monthly *Bible Study Course*, to help understand the Bible better.” M.H., Toronto, Ontario

“Enclosed is a small donation to help defray the cost of publishing and distributing the *GN* magazine. I enjoy reading it very much.” K.S., Edmonton, Alberta

“Find a small gift enclosed in appreciation of your *Good News*. I enjoy receiving same. The articles are so relevant today.” A.G., Balgonie, Saskatchewan

Anthony Wasilkoff

Mail Processing Staff to Increase

It’s been exciting to see the fruit borne by our efforts to reach out to the general public with the good news of God’s Kingdom. The mail processing department at the home office is now getting backlogged with unanswered mail—in particular, international mail. After discussion with the Council of Elders during a recent teleconference, approval was given to look for an additional employee with strong international geography knowledge to help process Web site e-mail and snail mail that comes from many English-speaking countries outside the United States.

Peter Eddington/Alec Surratt

Media Center

The treasurer has reported that regular income for the Church is on target, and therefore the Media Center Fund donations are able to be utilized over the coming months. To begin with, the architect who designed the home office building has been contacted to prepare plans for enclosing the space for the media center. Once plans are in, contractors are hired and the space is enclosed, we will begin the purchasing of equipment, lighting, cameras and set pieces. We would certainly appreciate your prayers for the success of this building project. It is a very exciting opportunity for the Church as we strive to be as effective as possible in preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom. A special thanks to all of those who donated above their regular contributions for this project.

Peter Eddington

Media Department: Record-Breaking Year!

The calendar year of 2004 showed some very encouraging results for Media and Communications Services. The Church's efforts to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God and provide biblical-education materials reached new heights. Technological advances now available to us have been taken advantage of in many ways, making possible the wider proclamation of the good news of God's Kingdom, with no real increase in budget.

Our staff is to be commended for handling these increases in stride. Our incoming mail (including the Internet) of 477,742 pieces (almost half a million—a 23 percent increase over 2003!) was very encouraging to see. The outgoing mail of 464,759 pieces (also almost half a million!), was ably handled by dedicated personnel.

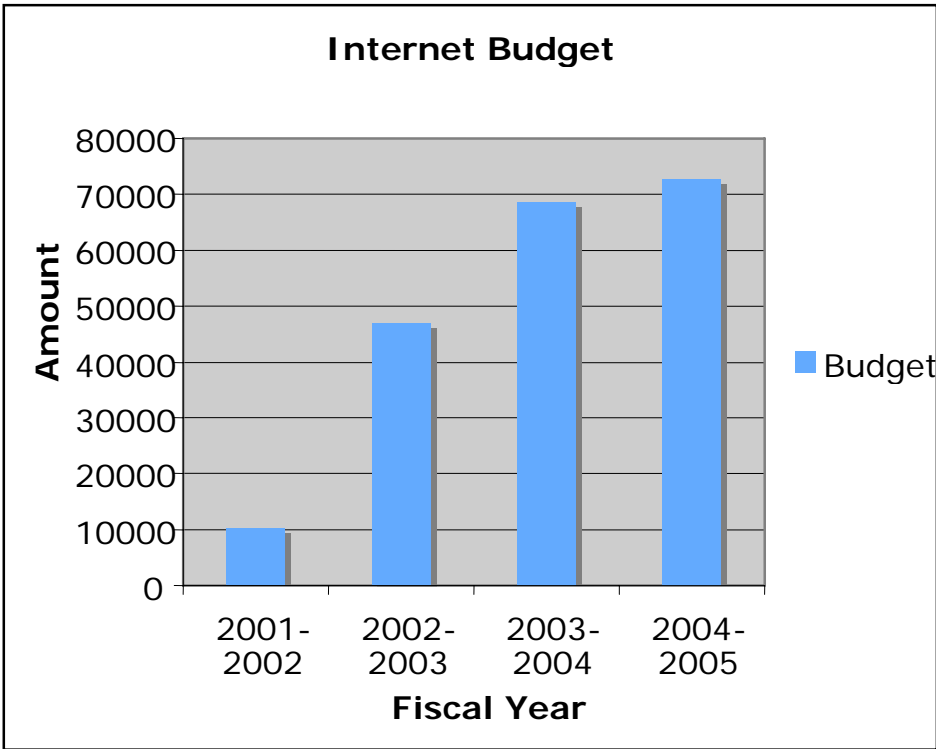
Much thanks must additionally go to our team of editors, managing editors, writers and copy editors. Media and Communications Services has just a handful of employees doing this full time, and so the dozens of pastors, elders and other writers around the world make the immense job of publishing so much material possible. Our key publications (*The Good News*, *World News and Prophecy*, *United News* and *Vertical Thought*) along with a myriad of other booklets, study courses, reading programs, etc., are among the best the Church of God has ever made available to its membership and the world at large. Please continue to pray that our efforts to preach the gospel will fall on fertile soil, and that God will provide the laborers and increase as He sees fit. May we be useful tools in His work, preaching the truth in the most effective way possible!

While there is still so much yet to do in this regard, the following figures show the wonderful accomplishments of the past 12 months.

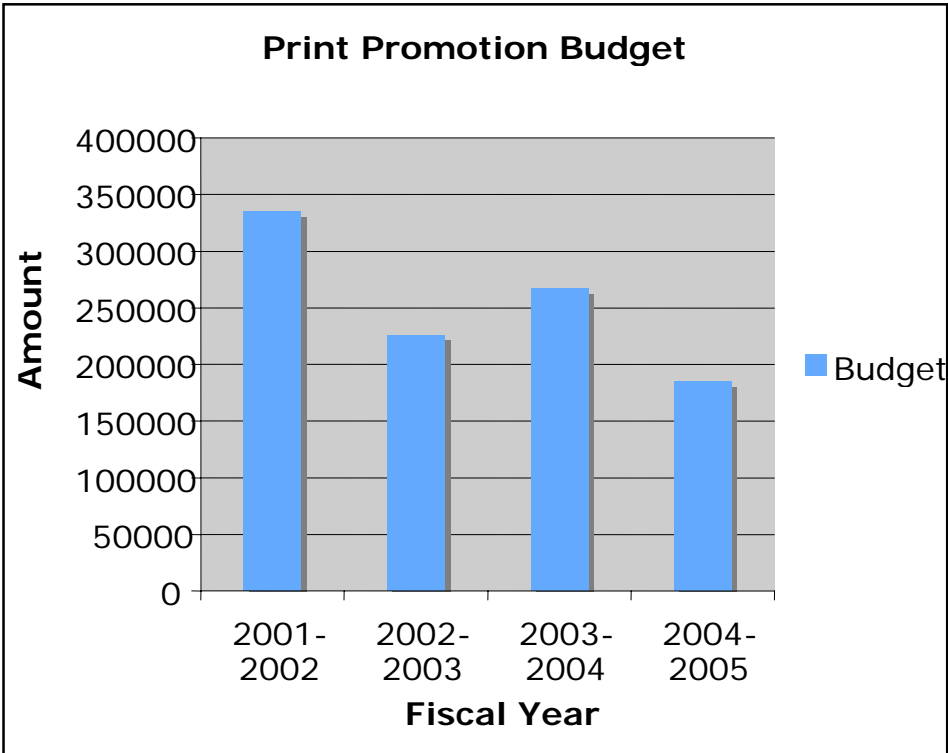
	2003	2004	Increase
Outgoing Mailroom Literature Pieces	384,889	464,759	21%
Incoming Mail Pieces Processed (not including Internet responses)	310,982	328,233	6%
Monthly Visitors to www.ucg.org	163,678	310,933	90%
U.S. <i>Good News</i> Subscribers	238,379	276,565	16%
Internet Literature Responses	76,417	149,509	96%
Incoming Donation Mail Pieces	59,817	60,755	2%
<i>World News and Prophecy</i> Circulation	20,978	30,167	44%
Incoming Nondonation Mail Pieces	17,653	21,462	22%
<i>Vertical Thought</i> Print Run	5,000	17,000	240%
U.S. Members and Their Families on File	16,534	16,651	1%
Daily Visitors to www.ucg.org	5,280	10,030	90%
Donors	5,207	6,103	17%
Coworkers	2,281	2,678	17%

As you can see, the Internet has provided a major portion of our responses, and our sites are increasingly visited by more and more Web users. Literature requests received via our Web sites almost doubled over the last 12 months! Also, we see a 90 percent increase in the number of monthly visitors to www.ucg.org, which is very encouraging!

With the limited resources at our disposal, the Internet has become a very cost-effective media to promote our literature and the gospel message, yet we are still able to use a measured portion of our budget for printed promotions. The accompanying chart shows the media department's rise in Internet advertising-related expenditures over the past four years.



With a similar overall budget from year to year, the Internet category was able to be increased by reducing what was spent for print advertising, as you can see from the following chart. The mix of more Internet compared to less print is becoming more important as printing and mailing costs continue to increase, while the cost of advertising on the Internet is still very favorable. In addition, when Internet respondents see our ads, they have the opportunity to read as much as they wish about us and our message before hitting the “send” button! These respondents are often better “qualified” subscribers than those who respond to a small print space ad.



As we enter the budget process very soon for 2005-2006, we aim to allocate an even greater percentage of our resources to the Internet, yet still have a very strong print advertising campaign—as well as use other methods of communicating our message, like radio and television. We are excited about working on our proposed media center very soon, and plans to enclose the space we will use are underway. Please pray for God to continue to provide the resources (both human and financial!) for the Church to increase its reach, effectiveness and resourcefulness.

Peter Eddington

Personal Correspondence

We finished 2004 with 86 PCD letters for December and 1,248 for the year, an average of 104 per month. Here are some details from the correspondence we received recently.

- A subscriber asked us what God's view is of men and women wrestling. (That's all the detail he provided!)
- We had four visit requests from inmates who are new to the file. When these come in, we always first introduce them to PCD's services, as they usually aren't really ready to progress toward baptism.
- A reader asked what the Bible says about sex-change surgery. Another asked how to overcome being a sex abuser (he is presently serving time for this).
- Another inmate who had a rough life humbly asked how it is possible for someone like him to be accepted into the Kingdom of God.
- Letters from two subscribers who wrote for prayer were strikingly humble too: A destitute Ethiopian asked for our prayers for God's help, rather than asking for money, as so many from third world countries do. A lady wrote first to thank us profusely for the great help all of our publications have been to her; only after doing that did she ask us to pray for her health, explaining that she has lung cancer.
- A subscriber asked for advice, because she foresees that she might be asked to work on the Sabbath in busy seasons. If that happens, she proposed that she donate her earnings to charity and asked if that would be breaking the Sabbath. We explained that it would be, but we pointed out that most believers are able to keep their jobs and keep the Sabbath, offering her suggestions on how to go about that.
- One asked what might seem to be an outlandish question until you know the background. He wanted to know if people should bow before a minister. The writer is from a West African country where religious customs can be quite different from those with which we are familiar.
- Finally, one person related his unusual experience in finding us. He was a member of Wicca (witchcraft) when he learned from reading the Bible that he should be a Christian. So he quit Wicca and converted to Christianity, but after being part of today's Christian community for a while, he became so disillusioned that he gave up on it entirely and he actually returned to Wicca, preferring it to the hypocrisy that he saw in Christianity. Somehow he came across our literature, much to his delight. He recognizes that he has finally found a church organization that practices the Christianity of the Bible.

Cecil Maranville

Writing Classes by E-mail

Attention potential writers: We will be offering a five-lesson introductory writing class for anyone (young or old, male or female, member or elder) interested in writing for the Church's publications. The lessons will be sent out by e-mail and assignments should be sent in by e-mail. Potential assignments include articles for *United News*, *Virtual Christian Magazine* and *Vertical Thought*.

To apply, send a 50- to 100-word paragraph describing why you would like to take this course to mike_bennett@ucg.org. First come, first served. Deadline: March 1. Writers and editors beyond the introductory level, we would love to hear from you too.

Mike Bennett