

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

Home Office Update February 9, 2006

Dear Brethren,

Guten Tag and *buon giorno!* Dee and I just returned Monday evening from a 12-day trip to Germany and Italy, visiting the offices and staff, and getting to know many of the members in those countries, and also a number from the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland.

We returned with sadness over the tragic and sudden death last Sabbath of Onnie Thompson (wife of Richard Thompson, pastor of Orlando, Ocala and Jacksonville, Florida, and member of the Council of Elders) due to a massive stroke. It serves to accentuate the tenuous nature of this physical existence. God's Kingdom is the only true solution to the sufferings and anguish of this present world. This must be our message (the good news of that Kingdom) that goes out to the world. Mrs. Thompson's funeral will be on Friday morning in Jackson, Mississippi, and several of us from the home office plan to attend. Please remember Mr. Thompson and his two sons, Scott and Brett, in your prayers.

If any of you are ever able to visit Germany or Italy, especially at the Feast of Tabernacles, I'm sure that you will treasure the experience. We really appreciated the warm welcome from the brethren at Sabbath services in Dormagen and Milano. It was encouraging to see that even though they are scattered and in relatively small congregations, they are wholeheartedly doing everything they can to forward the mission of the Church in preaching the gospel and being prepared as the people of God.

We were also inspired to see the dedication of Paul Kieffer and Carmelo Anastasi in leading the work of the Church in Germany and Italy. Since the beginning of United the church offices have been located in the basements of their homes, but in the last year both areas have been able to open modest but nice offices that will allow them to function more effectively. Not only were we able to become more familiar with the Church's efforts there, but we also were able to take side trips to Berlin, with Jesmina Allaoua from the German office staff, and to Venice, with Mr. and Mrs. Anastasi and Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Di Vita, the minister in Sicily. Both cities are rich in historical significance, and all of Europe is developing steadily, if not quickly, in its prophesied rise as a world power.

We returned to a busy home office, with filming of *Beyond Today* programs and the Feast coordinators meetings taking place Wednesday and Thursday.

The work is moving on, brethren, and God will be with us as we do our best to serve and honor Him in our efforts. Keep up the good work, and let's stay locked arm in arm with one another around the world.

Clyde Kilough

Ministerial Services

Sharron and I are still getting settled, and I am adjusting to my new job. After 34 years in the field ministry, it is a bit different to go to an office every day! But I am in the office and ready to assist you in any way that I possibly can. This week we are meeting with the Feast coordinators. Topics such as Feast transfer policy, fund-raising policy, Festival education schedule, Festival site selection and Festival reports from last year are being covered during the two-day meeting. This year we have 11 U.S. Feast sites, and we will assist in many more around the world. Balancing the manpower needs among the various sites is one of our greatest challenges.

After the Feast coordinators leave town, we will hold another two-day meeting next week for those who have been involved in the various education modules. In 1996 four education modules were created by the Council of Elders, and the administration of the education programs for the Church was given to the president, who in turn, asked that Ministerial Services take on this responsibility. Ministerial Services has been coordinating these efforts since that time. Recently we have seen the appointing of a new director of education (David Register) for the purpose of bringing all our education programs together under a single administration. We plan for a unified effort to get educational material into the hands of our youth, our members and our ministry. It is one of our greatest challenges. In addition, ABC is being integrated into our overall education program. The area of education is one in which much work needs to be done. The meetings next week will help us make progress with this daunting task. We would very much appreciate your prayers for the success of both sets of meetings.

Jim Franks

Ambassador Bible Center Update

We have now completed the first month of ABC, and our largest class ever (52 students) is showing a great deal of promise. Each year's class has its own personality, and this year's class is showing itself to be warm, responsive and quick to volunteer for service.

In addition to the classes our resident instructors teach, Richard Thompson taught a module on the Gospels the first three weeks of the year and Ken Graham taught several classes on Greek and textual criticism. We really appreciate these men taking time from their families and congregations to come to Cincinnati and teach at ABC. The ABC students comment about how much they appreciate learning from so many of God's ministers.

We have also begun two speech clubs with the ABC students this year. This class is very enthusiastic for extracurricular activities.

Our first major student social activity of the year was the Super Bowl party at the home office. Students and home office employees enjoyed watching the Super Bowl projected on a giant screen and socializing over a Mexican feast!

Dave Register

Beyond Today Web Site Visitors and Program Response

Overall, the first two months of activity at the *Beyond Today* Web site, www.beyondtoday.tv, went very well. 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. During January, 132 gigabytes of material was streamed to our visitors. This amount of bandwidth usage is much higher than at either www.ucg.org (35.3 gigabytes) or www.gnmagazine.org (65.8 gigabytes). This is, of course, due to the larger streaming video files found primarily at our *Beyond Today* Web site.

Beyond Today is scheduled to air on 124 channels at present. However, many of these channels are still working through the transition from airing our previous *Tomorrow* program and *Good News TV* program. One early survey of our sponsors showed that only about half of the stations are actually up and running with our new program. We expect that the transition should be complete by the end of February. For example, two of our biggest markets, Chicago and San Diego, are not yet airing *Beyond Today* but will very soon. This has affected our responses somewhat. 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. We anticipate that February will continue to show a steady increase once again as more stations come on board with our program.

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

Peter Eddington

Beyond Today Listed on Google Video

The popular online search tool, Google, offers a new video search feature where registered users can upload videos to the Google video Web site. This free service allows visitors to search for posted videos and either view them online or download them to their local computer.

Currently we have eight *Beyond Today* TV programs posted on the Google video Web site. In just a few weeks these programs have been viewed over 1,500 times. The most popular program—"Is There Life After Death?"—has generated over 1,000 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 www.beyondtoday.tv Web site. This is all at no additional cost to the Church.

Aaron Booth

ABC Classes Now Online

In January, two more Ambassador Bible Center classes were posted on the ABC section of our Web site. The two classes are the Acts of the Apostles (by Matthew Fenchel) and the Epistles of Paul (by Roy Holladay). You can listen to them online in MP3 format at www.ucg.org/abc/classes. A total of seven complete classes and three additional, special presentations are now available. This year we are recording Gary Antion's Comparative Religion class. After this there will be five classes to go before the entire syllabus is available to all Internet visitors.

MP3 CD copies of these two new classes will be mailed to pastors shortly. Members can either download them online or get them from their congregation's tape library. Please don't contact the home office for copies. All seven classes found online have been sent to pastors over the past few years for their local congregation tape libraries as well.

Peter Eddington

Opportunities for Member Participation

In the past few weeks, an increasing number of brethren have inquired about how they can begin airing *Beyond Today* video programs on public-access television in their communities. Having debuted on Dec. 18, 2005, on many of the 105 channels where we had been showing *Tomorrow* and *Good News TV* programs, *Beyond Today* programs are now set to air on 124 channels. Due to our brethren's diligent efforts, approval to air on 20 additional channels is now pending.

Even with this growing number of channels, there are still *plenty* of additional opportunities for *Beyond Today* programs to air in *many* more cities and towns. According to the national office of the Alliance for Community Media in Washington D.C., there are 3,000 public cable-access centers across the United States! Wouldn't now be a good time for *you* to check out the opportunity to air *Beyond Today* in your community?

Besides sponsoring *Beyond Today*, brethren can also participate in the *Good News* subscription brochure program. Currently, over 300 brethren and congregations are actively involved. With 90,000 attractive, tri-fold brochures currently in inventory, there are many opportunities for additional brethren to participate.

To learn more about how you can sponsor *Beyond Today* on public-access television in your community and/or to request a supply of *Good News* subscription brochures and displays, please write to John LaBissoniere at john_labissoniere@ucg.org or call him toll-free at 888-369-9940.

John LaBissoniere

Personal Correspondence

We finished January with 65 surface mail PCD letters and five PCD e-mail letters. Here are some highlights.

An inmate both rejoiced and grieved over his new understanding of God's plan for mankind. "Why didn't God call me earlier, before I messed up my life?" he asked. That's a tough one, although we assured him that each of us could have the confidence that God calls us at the best time for us. And we need to focus on the fact that the most important time of our lives is yet ahead.

A subscriber receiving literature from another Church of God group explained that it says it is the only true Church; he asked us why there are different organizations. Another asked what differences there are between the (former) Worldwide Church of God and us. Still on the topic of our organization, a reader asked if we are Israelis, Israelites or Jews. Similarly, a reader who is coming to realize the validity of the Old Testament laws asked if gentiles have to convert to Judaism.

On circumcision, a subscriber asked why the first-century Church changed the law on this matter, when the Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. On the food laws, a person asked why honey is a clean food, when bees are not. Looking at the verses that say God promotes people and that government authorities are from Him, a reader asked if God determines the U.S. president.

We make our articles as plain as possible, but sometimes the point doesn't come across as clearly as we might think it does. After reading a recent article on Christmas, a subscriber asked if we are suggesting that Christmas should be kept on a different day or if we mean that one should not observe it at all. Another person wanted to know what we mean when we write, "Emphasis added throughout." Another wanted to know what we mean by "pagan" and "paganism." Lastly, a reader told us that she didn't request the magazine, and she wanted us to send her the subscription card that ordered it. Apparently, she feared being charged. But she likes the magazine! We assured her that there is no charge (we don't keep the original subscription request cards) and we offered to continue her subscription.

Cecil Maranville