

# United Church of God *an International Association*

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## Letter From the Chairman October 22, 2004

Warmest greetings to everyone,

To no one's surprise, the lesson was taught again this year: no matter how many years you do it, keeping the feasts of God is an experience that just never grows old! Jesus Christ made a marvelous statement to His disciples when He said, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11). For the last six weeks we have studied numerous elements of that mystery, in particular the events leading up to, surrounding and following the return of the King of Kings, and how God will consequently save this world. Could there be anyone who does not count that knowledge as among the greatest blessings God has given us? What a source of inspiration, hope and encouragement! What a tool for strengthening our faith! What a prod for motivating us to conform our lives today to the standards of the world tomorrow!

Many of you have expressed such thoughts about this year's Feast season, and the feedback has been extremely positive and encouraging. Wherever you were around the world, I hope that you came away from the Feast spiritually refreshed and zealous to do the work that lies ahead between now and the coming Kingdom of God.

Quite interestingly, focusing on doing their God-given work was the central theme of a Feast of Tabernacles message in 520 B.C., and a subject no less relevant today. After returning to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon, the remnant of exiled Jews had grown discouraged and lost their commitment to the great cause for which they came—to rebuild the temple of God. So God sent the prophet Haggai, and the second of his four messages came during the Feast of Tabernacles (Haggai 2:1). They had recently been stirred to resume the work (Haggai 1:12-14; Ezra 5:1-2), but now God gave them even more confidence to get on with their task:

“Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ says the LORD; ‘and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,’ says the LORD, ‘and work; for I am with you,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!’” (Haggai 2:3-5).

A prophetic shift takes place in verse 6, looking to events yet to be fulfilled:

“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:6-9).

Hebrews 12:26 quotes verse 6 of Haggai's prophecy, then draws the conclusion,

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (verse 28).

Through the Holy Days and feasts, God has given us a prophetic vision of that unshakable Kingdom, in part so that we, too, remain unshakable (see Proverbs 29:18). Like the remnant in Haggai's time, we realize that we are also working on a temple, the latter-day spiritual house of God. “Do you not know that you are the temple

of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” asked Paul (1 Corinthians 3:16; see also 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-10).

Each of us has an individual work to accomplish, and together we have a work as a church (see Ephesians 4:11-16). Given this vision of the future, let’s renew now our commitment to work hard spiritually, on our knees and in pure-hearted service. Let’s commit to work unitedly with one another, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Let’s commit to work on preaching the gospel more effectively than ever. Let’s remember that our strength lies solely in how much God is working in us—we can never perform above what we are internally, spiritually. We have much to do to finish our work, but with God’s help at the 2005 Feast we will be able to look back on another year of great progress.

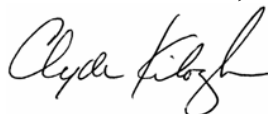
Speaking of “kingdoms” being shaken, the eyes of the world are on the November 2, 2004, U.S. presidential election. The political war rhetoric is intensifying, each party warning that the world will be shaken if their opponent is in office and reassuring that the world will be secure with their man at the helm. For those of us who have been given the “mystery of the kingdom of God,” one thing is of paramount importance about this election—“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). God’s vote is the one that really matters. Who does He want in that office? Members in the Church are living under all types of governments, and some of you sometimes face radical changes and terrifying threats. In this unstable world the greatest vote we can cast is on our knees, fervently asking God to intervene and direct all nations according to His will.

Since we Americans are in the midst of a national political battle that certainly has international implications, it’s a good time to review our doctrinal study paper, “Voting and Involvement in Politics” (available on the UCG Web site at [www.ucg.org/papers](http://www.ucg.org/papers) or by hard copy upon request from an elder or the home office). It thoroughly examines all the scriptures pertaining to God’s, humanity’s and a Christian’s connection to the world’s governmental affairs. While you’re at it, another profitable review would be the “Godly Governance” paper. In contrast to worldly politics is true godly governance. But what is that, exactly? This in-depth study really magnifies the biblical principles and how they apply to His governing at all levels of life.

Finally, I’d like to mention that we had unusually heavy rain and mountain snows here in California earlier this week, a warning that winter is just around the corner. However, we also had an update from Mark Winner as a sunny reminder that the annual Winter Family Weekend in Louisville, Kentucky, is only nine weeks away. The 394 rooms at the Clarion Hotel are now filled up (don’t worry, there is an overflow hotel, the Holiday Inn, nearby), and an incredible schedule of events for everyone of all ages is nearing completion. On the educational front, in addition to Sabbath services we will have no less than 16 seminars to choose from (with babysitting available for parents) and Sabbath school for grades K-6. For activities, we have facilities for basketball, volleyball, flag football, speedway, batting cages, novelty Olympics and Frisbee golf. Socially, the event starts with a Wednesday night pizza party, singles will have various activities, several dances are on the docket, as well as pool parties, karaoke sessions and possibly an Ohio River cruise as well as a tour of the Louisville Slugger factory. Also, look for a family fun fair that includes a mechanical bull, “sumo wrestling suits,” inflatable jumping arenas, putt-putt golf, kids’ games and races, plus more. In short, there will be plenty to do for everyone. Financially, the \$30 room rate is phenomenal and, incidentally, the city of Louisville is giving the Church \$1,000 for bringing the business to town! More announcements are coming, or check the Web site updates at [www.ucg.org/familyweekend](http://www.ucg.org/familyweekend). The main attraction, of course, is the great fellowship we have with one another. It’s a wonderful time and place to meet friends new and old, and I hope to see you there.

Brethren, we are truly blessed. We have much to look forward to, both in the short term and especially in the long term, and we have some valuable Feast memories to look back on and use for growth. Let’s keep on, and keep up, the good work!

In Christ’s Service,



Clyde Kilough