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JOHN 8:32

May 31, 2004

Church lets elder go when he disregards its gag order

By John Warren

The April edition of *THE JOURNAL* reported that Jim O'Brien of Liberty Township, Ohio, who has pastored congregations of the United Church of God in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Georgetown, Ky., was suspended for comments he made during Sabbath announcements in Lexington on March 13. (The congregation meeting in Georgetown is incorporated as the Lexington Church of God, and the congregation is customarily referred to as "Lexington." Georgetown is a few miles from Lexington.)

In April Roy Holladay of Cincinnati, president of the UCG, headquartered in the Cincinnati suburb of Milford, and Richard Pinelli, also from the Cincinnati area and director of the church's ministerial-services department, removed Mr. O'Brien from his speaking duties.

Church-headquarters officials had asked Mr. O'Brien to apologize to the congregation, which he says he did to individual church members by telephone and also to the congregation as a group at a subsequent church service on March 27.

At that time the pastor said he should not have made the comments, which he blamed on "frustration."

Some of his frustration seems to have come from a variety of personal accusations Mr. O'Brien says church officials leveled at him and some has come partly out of empathy with what he sees as the plight of harassed fellow church members in Pennsylvania. (See "Congregation Questions New Pastor's Decision to Abolish Advisory Council," beginning on page 10 of this issue.)

The Cincinnati North and Lexington

congregations were two of the dwindling number of UCG churches with real, legally incorporated boards of directors whose authority, at least according to the laws of the land, supercedes the authority of the UCG denomination as a whole.

After two meetings with his supervisors in the UCG in March and April, Mr. O'Brien says UCG officials leveled still more "accusations" at him.

During the process of interviewing Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Pinelli, the ministerial-services director, instructed Mr. O'Brien not to speak to anyone about the situation and that violation of the order not to speak could result in his termination.

Nevertheless, Mr. O'Brien did speak candidly to his Lexington congregation, which apparently church officials saw as a violation of what some in the congregation called the "gag order."

In a letter to Mr. Holladay and the UCG's headquarters-based 12-man council of elders, Mr. O'Brien responded to the UCG's questions and allegations.

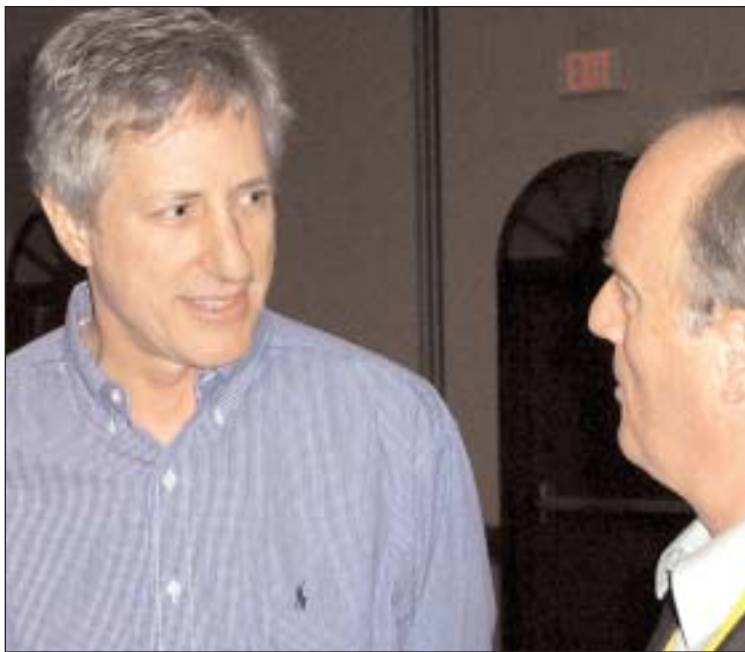
"I want to begin by saying how stressful this situation has been, in fact how stressful the last two years have been," his letter began. "I have had a growing sense of frustration, and several weeks ago that frustration broke through during the Lexington announcements.

"The next day I called the brethren individually and apologized. The next week I apologized in public to the congregation."

Mr. O'Brien explained the reasons for his public comments.

"The source of my frustration had

See **PASTOR**, page 10



CHANGE OF COURSE—Jim O'Brien of Liberty Township, Ohio (left), visits with fellow pastor Paul Kieffer of Bonn, Germany, at the United Church of God's general conference of elders May 2 in Cincinnati, Ohio, attended by most of the ordained elders of the UCG. Mr. Kieffer directs the UCG's operations in Germany, and until recently Mr. O'Brien pastored two congregations for the UCG near the denomination's Milford, Ohio, headquarters. See an article about the general conference and an article about Mr. O'Brien, both beginning on this page, and a related article beginning on page 10. [Photo by Dixon Cartwright]

An elder with Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena tells why Harvest needs Ambassador Auditorium

By Bill Stough

LONEDELL, Mo.—The Worldwide Church of God has sold the Ambassador Auditorium and other structures on its 13-acre "lower campus" in Pasadena, Calif., to the charismatic Harvest Rock Church and Maranatha High School.

The WCG announced May 14 the completion of the transaction, which includes the hall of administration, physical-education complex, student center and Grove Terrace dormitory.

Neither seller nor buyers disclosed the sale price.

The WCG has an agreement with the new owners to lease space in the administration building for two years.

However, WCG treasurer Bernie Schnippert had earlier stated the church intends eventually to move its base of operations to an undetermined city east of Pasadena.

The disposition of the approximately 18 acres of the upper campus is yet to be determined and could sell off piece by piece, Dr. Schnippert said.

However, as part of its arrangement with the WCG, Maranatha has first option on buying the upper campus.

Why Harvest Rock?

THE JOURNAL contacted Kenneth Storey, a 64-year-old elder with Harvest Rock who was a member of and

an official with the WCG in the 1970s.

"I was director of space planning at AC [Ambassador College, operated by the WCG on the church-owned grounds]." I helped plan the new buildings and allocated space to the various departments who needed it.

"I then went on to start the Foundation for Biblical Research with [former WCG members] Dr. Ernest Martin and Gary Arvidson. I am a founding member of Harvest Rock Church, a member of [Harvest Rock's] stewardship council and am called an elder by the leadership."

Nowadays Mr. Storey is a project engineer for Mackintosh & Mackin—See **CHURCH WITH**, page 39

Subbotniki carrying out 'good works' in Transcarpathia

The writer, a physicist and independent Sabbath-keeper, lives in the Netherlands and researches the history of the true faith under the Sabatarians and Samaritans. He is married, with four children and two grandchildren. Contact Mr. Rook at bonne.rook@cabbar.com.

By Bonne A. Rook

MARKNESSE, Netherlands—Subbotniki is the Russian word for Sabatarians, with the same meaning as the Hungarian *Szombatosok* and the German *Sabatier*. The Subbotniki keep all the Ten Commandments, including the Fourth, and hold to the faith of Abraham, the father of all faithful.

Some Subbotniki live in Transcarpathia, a region in the southwest of Ukraine. They have lived there since centuries before the Protestant Reformation and have practiced their faith under severe hardships.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, their situation changed from suppression to allowance and—in the small town of Vynogradov, not far from the border with Hungary and Romania—even to acceptance and respect. This is because of their good works.

These Subbotniki live their faith

and proclaim the gospel in word and deed (James 2:26). They set a shining example for all who have also been called to do good works, as the apostle James has written: "For as the body without breath [Greek *penumbra*] is dead, so is also the faith without works dead" (James 2:26).

Your light

Jesus the Messiah has admonished His disciples: "... Let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Our brethren, the Subbotniki of a small town in Transcarpathia, are setting an example for us in what they are doing for the community in their ministry, which they call Light of Love.

We begin the history of the Subbotniki in Vynogradov in the 1990s, when freedom of religion at last became a reality.

In Transcarpathia, before the emergence of glasnost in the old Soviet Union in 1986, at least 2,500 scattered Subbotniki had lived their faith under extreme hardships.

The congregation in 1992—more than 12 years ago now—acquired a

See **SOLUTION TO VANDALISM**, page 8

CGOM helps scattered individuals and churches

The writer is a member of the Tulsa Church of God, which is affiliated with the Churches of God Outreach Ministries.

By Renee Steel

TULSA, Okla.—Churches of God Outreach Ministries, which had its eighth annual conference in Tulsa during the last weekend of March, continues its mission of providing literature and services to brethren and other interested people across the United States and in several foreign countries.

CGOM, which began in 1996, capitalizes on common beliefs and goals to inspire people to work together to promote the gospel. Its affiliated congregations also function as a support network, providing opportunity for encouragement and communication among brethren from independent congregations.

During the conference in March, delegates had the chance to share ideas through plenary and breakout sessions. Conference accomplishments included the creation of sound bites for the CGOM Web site to help promote Internet-based teaching.

The delegates named new committee chairmen to the following positions: Julian Cruz of San Antonio, Texas, committee coordinator; Steve Kieler of Fort Dodge, Iowa, who will now answer the 800 number at

See **CGOM PROVIDES**, page 9

- 3 Ellis Stewart says the Pharisees served as Jesus' object lesson
- 3 Jaime Welch, writing about Jim O'Brien, says it wasn't supposed to be like this
- 40 Dianne McDonnell reports on an unusual women's gathering near Dallas
- 40 Jessica Wilson and Mandi Steele volunteer for teaching in Thailand

Announce your site for Feast 2004

For the eighth year *THE JOURNAL* is publishing a monthly listing of sites and dates of Feast of Tabernacles observances.

Members of Church of God and other Sabbatarian Christian fellowships will meet at several hundred Feast sites this year.

Now is the time to send in your Feast-contact, location and date information.

When submitting information, writers should state the dates (on the Gregorian calendar) on which their observance (including the Last Great Day) will fall in 2004. Otherwise *THE JOURNAL* will assume each observance will begin the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 29, and run through Thursday, Oct. 7.

Send to info@thejournal.org or P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A. For more information see the first installment of this year's listing on page 5 of this issue.

Meeting near Dallas includes two ordinations

ARLINGTON, Texas—Sabbath-keeping Christian women and men came to the Dynamic Deborahs Conference from Missouri, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Arizona, Florida and Texas and agreed the three-day meetings in late April and early May—including the ordination of two women—were worth the trip.

The conference is sponsored by the Church of God Dallas-Fort Worth, pastored by Dianne McDonnell of Arlington.

The first presentation, "Paul and Women Teachers," given by Mrs. McDonnell the evening of April 30, unraveled the confusing words of Paul and the mysterious Greek word *authentein* that has "negatively impacted God's women for many centuries," Mrs. McDonnell told *THE JOURNAL*.

"The presentation made the point that, although Paul lambasted a woman teacher who was not to *authentein* a man, he also took a woman along on a missionary journey, called one woman a *diakonos*, which is Greek for servant-minister, and referred to another woman as an outstanding apostle," she said.

Mrs. McDonnell made a colorful presentation the next day called "Women Bearing Torches" that re-

vealed truths buried beneath badly translated Bible passages.

Both presentations will soon be DVDs. For a copy leave a message at (972) 601-9032, extension 3777, or write P.O. Box 152544, Arlington, Texas 76015, U.S.A., or dynamicdeborahs@aol.com.

Workshops also tackled servant leadership based on Jesus' instructions in Matthew 20 and offered help with outreach, led by June Narber of Raleigh, N.C., and "Practical Evangelism," by John Currier of Douglasville, Ga. A presentation by Ronda Oprean of Hillsboro, Mo., focused on "lives of service."

"The freedom of finally knowing for sure that God loves His women and allows them to serve Him without limitations, that is such joyful knowl-



Dianne McDonnell

edge," Mrs. McDonnell said.

On the last day, May 2, two women who were already leading Sabbath congregations, Patsy Adams of the Memphis, Tenn., area and Jeanette Flowers of Cincinnati, Ohio, were ordained as elders and servant ministers of Jesus Christ.

Ms. Adams has led a group for seven years, and Mrs. Flowers had five people waiting for baptism when she returned home.

"Jeanette also has a ministry for homeless teenagers," said Mrs. McDonnell. "Both women are seasoned, long-time members of the Churches of God, and both observe and teach the Sabbath and the holy days as well as the full message of Jesus."

Musical talents amplified the conference, with Ms. Oprean and Ms. Narber singing praises to God and newly ordained Pastor Flowers singing an emotional "Lord's Prayer" at the event's conclusion.

"Then everyone—male and female—shared one last marvelous time together," said Mrs. McDonnell, "enjoying lunch in a nearby restaurant before reluctantly leaving the Dynamic Deborahs Conference with joyful new knowledge, a special new notebook and dynamic new friends."

Congregation decides to send more teachers

By John Warren

BIG SANDY, Texas—The board of trustees of the Church of God Big Sandy on May 3 approved the pastor's recommendation to support two volunteer teachers at the Legacy Institute in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Last year was the first time that the congregation sent a volunteer teacher to Legacy, a Church of God ministry founded by Leon and Gloria Sexton in May 2002.

"Sending our first missionary last year was so positive that we planned to sponsor another teacher again this year," said Dave Havir, pastor of the Texas congregation.

Last year the congregation sent Amie Hufton, who had recently grad-

uated from Texas A&M University at Galveston. The congregation paid for transportation and visa costs. Though Legacy provided housing and food, the congregation also paid her a monthly stipend.

In March Mr. Havir interviewed Jessica Wilson, who has spent two years attending the University of Chicago (Ill.). Miss Wilson, who is the daughter of Karl and Sharon Wilson of Tyler, Texas, arranged with university officials to take a short break from college to teach at Legacy.

"After interviewing Jessica, I knew that I would be recommending her," said Mr. Havir.

But Mr. Havir noted a "pleasant problem" he encountered in late March when he interviewed Mandi

Steele, the daughter of Randy and Diane Steele of Stockton, Mo.

"When I visited Mandi and her father in Joplin, I realized that we now had two excellent candidates," he said. "Even though I had already committed to Jessica that I would recommend her for a scholarship, I wanted us to do something for Mandi too."

Mr. Havir told *THE JOURNAL* that he recommended to the board that the congregation give Miss Wilson a full scholarship and help Miss Steele with her airfare. The board agreed.

Miss Steele, who graduated from Missouri State College in Joplin, Mo., earlier this month, was featured in a *JOURNAL* article two years ago because of her work as a journalism intern in Washington, D.C. (see "Young Church of God Member Interns With Washington Online Mag WorldNetDaily.com" in the Oct. 31, 2002, issue).

Miss Steele is scheduled to teach in Thailand from June 2004 to March 2005 and Miss Wilson from November 2004 to March 2005.



Jessica Wilson



Mandi Steele

Notes and quotes

Barbecue for friends

PINE LEVEL, N.C.—An annual barbecue get-together for families and friends is planned for Pine Level Aug. 29.

The food is free, and, "as in the past, Fred Toole is cooking the barbecue beef," announced organizer Neal Brantley. "We would like for you to bring your favorite dish or dishes and drinks to complete the meal. Home-made pies are always a big hit."

The meal and fellowship will take place at the American Legion Building, near Interstate 95 and U.S. 70. For more information call (919) 550-2052 or write brantleyfence@wmconnect.com.

George Bush links to Craig White

ARLINGTON, Va.—The official Web site of President Bush's reelection effort recently linked to Church of God member Craig White's Web site.

A visitor to the president's Web address informed Mr. White, who lives in Sydney, Australia, that Mr. Bush's site links to the text of Mr. White's www.originofnations.org posting of President Ronald Reagan's January 1975 speech "We Will Be a City Upon a Hill."

The link, from www.georgewbush.com, was still up at this writing.

CD taking off

SIMI VALLEY, Calif.—Randy Vild reports that his *The World to Come* CD "is really taking off." So far he has distributed 800 copies of the music disc that he says many people have told him "helps them to relax and think of the Kingdom."

"The Eternal Church of God has purchased hundreds of CDs and are giving them away free on their site," Mr. Vild said.

Visit the Eternal COG at www.eternalcog.org/Pages/music.html and Mr. Vild at www.vildproductions.com.

"My personal goal is to have 10,000 distributed," he said.

Mr. Vild wrote the theme song for *The World to Come*, the Eternal COG's telecast. The church, pastored by Art Braidic, is based in Sunland, Calif.

Feast in Winchester

WINCHESTER, England—The historic cathedral town of Winchester in the south of England will be UCG U.K.'s Feast site for 2004 beginning the evening of Sept. 29, announced Gerry Russell of Hopkinsville, Ky.

Area attractions include Stonehenge, Roman baths and Windsor Castle. For information contact Mr. Russell at (270) 885-3993 or info@tbttours.com.

Feast sites confirmed

TYLER, Texas—Mark Armstrong of the Intercontinental Church of God announced that a Feast observance at French Lick, Ind., has been confirmed, as well as sites at Lake Tahoe, Calif., Kimberling City, Mo.,

Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Panama City Beach, Fla.

For information write sunshiner@worldnet.att.net or P.O. Box 1117, Tyler, Texas 74710, U.S.A. Visit the ICG on the Web at www.intercontinentalcog.org.

Scent-free Feast at Bluenose Inn

HALIFAX, N.S., Canada—Alex Nicholson announces that the Church of God Halifax's Feast of Tabernacles this year will be "scent-free" because some of the brethren "experience environmental illness." Therefore "we request everyone to refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or other scented products."

The Feast, which will begin Sept. 29 and continue through Oct. 7 in Halifax, will feature videotaped sermons delivered by the late Garner Ted Armstrong of the Intercontinental Church of God.

For reservations at Bluenose Inn & Suites call (800) 565-2301. For Feast registration call Mr. Nicholson at (902) 860-2880 or write him at ancbns@hotmail.com.

Mr. McNair's new site

SAN DIEGO, Calif.—Raymond McNair's new Web site is up and running at www.cog21.com and will soon feature literature including *America and Britain in Prophecy, Make God Your Financial Partner and Ascent to Greatness*.

Write Mr. McNair at raymondmcnair@earthlink.net or P.O. Box 502435, San Diego, Calif. 92150, U.S.A.

German updates and Feast

BONN, Germany—Paul Kieffer announces the United Church of God Germany is discontinuing its E-mail updates. Instead, the updates are available at www.vkg.org/activities.php. The site also includes information about the Feast observance this year beginning the evening of Sept. 29 in Schluchsee, in the Black Forest.

First nonfiction book

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.—E. Joyce Moore, a former WCG and current UCG member, has written her first nonfiction book, *Gettin' to the Good Wood*, available at bookstores in New York and Indianapolis.

The volume includes essays and poetry about life and relationships and a discussion of how the Stockholm syndrome applies to black Americans.

Write Ms. Moore at jemiltd@aol.com or P.O. Box 88403, Indianapolis, Ind. 46208, U.S.A. Or visit www.goodwood.bravehost.com.

News from Sunshine Mountain

CHATAWA, Miss.—Sunshine Mountain Home Seventh Day Baptist Church at 1070 St. Mary Rd., founded in 1976, invites you to Sabbath services. For more information write sunshinemountain2001@yahoo.com or P.O. Box 37, Sunshine Mountain Rd., Chatawa, Miss. 39632, U.S.A.

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