

# 2024 GCE Report to the Montana Brethren

(UCG General Conference of Elders)

By Daniel Deininger

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## **Introduction:**

Each year UCG has an annual ministerial conference. Included are instructive messages to the ministry and the conducting of an annual business meeting where four rotating Council of Elders are balloted on, any amendments to the governing documents are approved or disapproved, and the annual strategic plan, operation plan, and budget are approved.

Participation in the GCE is mandatory for employed elders, but can be done at home via teleconferencing software without going to Cincinnati. Those who travel to Cincinnati for the conference do so at their own expense for both travel costs, housing, and meals, although this year the Saturday night meal was provided by the Church. I have felt the opportunity to meet and talk with other elders is worth the expense of going and have appreciated God's blessings that have enabled us - both Val and I - to go this year. According to Rick Shabi's report this year there were a combination of 252 elders and wives at the conference.

## **Specific Purpose of This Message:**

Today I want to share the highlights of the GCE with you.

## **Need:**

UCG strives to help keep the members connected via weekly updates, I also want to give you the assurance that even though I don't have a lot of direct contact from Home Office, I am very much supportive of UCG Home Office and striving to be in sync with them, especially in our goal to proclaim the gospel and care for the brethren. I certainly appreciate the empowerment Home Office gives me to shepherd God's flock in Montana. I feel the annual GCE enhances my ability to do my job and fulfill my roles in a manner pleasing to God and Jesus Christ. I also feel that having personal contact with other ministers and home office staff is important when we do have needs in Montana and makes it easier for us to function as a team in service to God, Christ, and Their called out ones.

## **Fellowship with peers**

We were able to fellowship with numerous pastors and elders from both the United States and around the world.

- Ben & Shannon Light - Oregon
- Rob & Tina Slocum - Seattle
- Roc & Nancy Corbet - Tacoma
- Dave & Joy Jones - Denver
- June Hale - Denver
- Mitch & Linda Knapp - Omaha
- Jorge & Kathy DeCampos - Dallas (Portuguese work)
- Win & Anna Decker - Netherlands & Germany
- Mark & Barb Welch - Cincinnati
- Randy & Kay Schrieber - Colorado Springs
- Robin & Susan Webber - California
- John & Susan Miller - Ohio

I was also able to chat briefly with President Rick Shabi about the Feast of Tabernacles in West Yellowstone, as well as longer discussions with National Events Coordinator, Charles Melear, and Lena VanAusdle who does the Feast Support. She informed me that as of early this past week we had not only filled the 150 slots available for the West Yellowstone feast site, but also have over 30 names on the waiting list if anyone cancels. (If you live in Montana and are on the waitlist, please let me know!)

I was also able to spend time talking with Steve Myers, Operational Manager of Ministerial and Member Services about the recent growth and baptisms in Montana, as well as aspects of baptismal counseling and future plans for Montana. Other discussions were with Clint Porter about the church's website and how we can support what Home Office is doing on the internet with our local website, and social media support. In addition to discussions with multiple Northwest pastors, I was able to chat with a number of the Council of Elders including Victor Kubik, Len Martin, Tim Pebworth (named chairman after to the GCE), Rex Sexton, Scott Ashley, Jorge DeCampos, and Paul Wasilkoff.

Also, as some of you may have already known, Val was one of the presenters during the Ladies workshop. According to all the reports I heard she did a wonderful job. After she spoke she seemed to have a steady stream of ladies that wanted to talk to her about related topics.

## Sessions and Reports

Sabbath bible study with Gary Petty - A Study in Revival.

Some key points:

- Living our identity as the children of God
- Humbling ourselves to seek God
- Loving the truth, not just knowing it
- Making the Gospel part of our identity.. And our heart.


Grant Chick (Western Australia) the Analogy of the Master Weaver

Rick Shabi - Advancing the Mission and how to move forward.

- Building on the previous theme of "speaking the same thing"
- Once purified and unified the Church can move forward.
  - Have we come out of the world or are we part of it?
  - How unified are we in Montana?
  - How can we move forward in Montana?
  - Are we praying for more laborers?
    - Would we like to have weekly Sabbath services in each congregation
    - Would we like to see more congregations (Butte, Great Falls, Miles City, Sheridan, Bozeman)

President's Report (Rick Shabi)

- Prove 27:23 - know the state of your flocks
  - Congregations
  - Media

- International
  - Italy
  - Philippines
  - British Isles
- Eph 4:16 - God supplies everything we need. We need to be bold and direct in preaching the gospel! Not fearful!
  - <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-daily> Biblical Worldviews by Rick Shabi
  - Shorts/Reels: <https://www.youtube.com/@BeyondTodayTV/shorts>
  -  Do You Have an Immortal Soul?
    - Can we do these in Montana? Can we share them?  
Yes. I'm going to activate the UCG Montana Facebook page and start putting the Home Office "shorts" there. I am also going to learn how we can create shorts from my sermons and bible studies
    - Can we create our own shorts or worldviews based on Montana news events?

#### Treasurer's Report (Barry Korthuis)

- Income remains solid and has increased year by year.
- Strong reserves
- Increased assets (local church buildings)

#### Ministerial & Member Services (Steve Myers)

- Our calling & mission - to make disciples and care for them.
- We need to train our replacements
  - Offer more training and opportunities
  - Offered our basement for 6 months for someone from ABC that would like to help in Montana. Please pray about this.
- How can we spiritually enhance the Feast of Tabernacles
- Pray for God's help
  - Ephesians 4:3 KJV - Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.  
UNITY makes it happen. Unity requires humility
  - Hebrews 4:16 KJV - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

#### Media (Peter Eddington)

- Our job is to let the world know the Kingdom of God is coming. The message is the same, but the tools we have to do it today are different.
  - Mark 16:14 KJV - Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
  - Mark 16:15 KJV - And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
- The internet is the best tool. (Social Media and YouTube)
  - Facebook and Youtube ads - short videos getting good results
  - Facebook needs new media everyday.
    - Again, how can we help proclaim the gospel in Montana?

- 1 Corinthians 9:19 KJV - For though I be free from all [men], yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.
- 1 Corinthians 9:20 KJV - And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;
- 1 Corinthians 9:21 KJV - To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.
- 1 Corinthians 9:22 KJV - To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some.
- 1 Corinthians 9:23 KJV - And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with [you].
- New upgraded UCG website is coming... but challenges.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1 KJV - Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have [free] course, and be glorified, even as [it is] with you:

### **International Reports - Monday:**

Italian Report - Aaron Dean Stressed doctrinal integrity

West African Report - Paul Moody - emphasis on Ghana and Nigeria - much growth

Portuguese Work - Jorge deCampos - emphasis on Brazil and Angola. Angola - Much growth, but challenges for the Church to be recognized by the government. One elder spent time in jail. 1280 took Passover.

Canadian Report - Paul Wasilkoff - 24 congregations, 422 members (17 average) 18,000 BT subscribers

- Website has weekly bible quotes
- Website has weekly bible reading program
- Website has topical index to articles

British Isles - Jason Godfrey - 8 congregations, 200 members (25 average) in a country of 72 million. 11 elders, none are paid. 6000 BT subscribers

French work - Tim Pebworth Tim lives in Seattle but works full time for the French work. Does Zoom services. Coordinates with an office in France. They translate the French edition of the Beyond Today. Also have 600 subscribers to the French UCG YouTube channel.

Tim expressed a desire to come over and speak to us in Montana. (I was in a Pastor's speaking improvement group with him a year ago.) Tim is now the new Chairman of the Council of Elders.

Inspiring the Next Generation panel

- Young Adults
- Teens
- Pre-Teens

- How can we prepare for more of the next generation in Montana?
  - We've had one family move to another area to be around church teens
    - 5 children in Kalispel
    - 1 new teen in Helena
    - 1 new 19 year old in Helena
  - Online activities and youth program aids
    - Zoom or GoTo activities
  - Statewide get togethers
    - Family campouts
    - Family Weekends
    - Holy Day get togethers
  - Prayer - we need to proactively make our requests known to God

## The Strategic & Operational Plan

### Vision

*A Church led by God's Holy Spirit, joined and knit together by what every member supplies, with all doing their share and growing in love to fulfill God's great purpose for humanity to bring many children to glory.*

Ephesians 4:16 KJV - From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Hebrews 2:10 KJV - For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

### Mission

*The mission of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA), is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples.*

The Vision and Mission are the basis for the Strategic Plan and Operation Plan that is approved each year at the General Conference of Elders.

I believe reading and approving of these is an important step in keeping the entire ministry refocused on the direction of the Church and why we are doing what we are doing.

This year I would like to extract from them pieces that we can focus on in doing God's work in this beautiful state of Montana - edifying each other, and also those that God calls into this harvest just before the return of Jesus Christ... sparing more from the wrath to come because of both our national and individual disobedience to God and His commandments.

Going to the General Conference of Elders has inspired me to work hard to accomplish these goals here in Montana. However, I can not do it on my own. Val and I can not do it on our own.

We need the help of everyone in all the congregations doing their part and seeking the help and direction of God the Father and Jesus Christ!