

# Loyal Opposition

## A Case in Defense of the United Church of God

By Dennis Fischer  
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*Dear Brethren,*

The issue of dining out on the Sabbath remains one of the most hotly contested debates in the Churches of God today. The majority of fellowships believe this practice is permissible if done in moderation. However, there are those who see it much differently. These believers, including myself, are of the opinion that although there may be a rare exception (such as an unforeseen personal emergency or crisis), doing so under the guise of “moderation” is not one of them. On the contrary, such a position is indefensible in scripture.

Over the past thirteen years, I have written prolifically on this subject including authoring two books as well as over fifty articles. I have also published several comprehensive rebuttals to position papers proffered by various COG groups. Included among these groups is the United Church of God, a fellowship of which I am profoundly honored to be associated. This now brings me to the question(s) of the day—one(s) I have heard often.

- Why would anyone choose to associate with a COG who holds to a doctrine of which they are in strong opposition?
- Furthermore, why would any association permit such a person to fellowship with them?

These are fair queries and worthy of being addressed although I have never done so previously. The purpose of this letter is to end the silence. Furthermore, when doing so I hope to provide some insights concerning my relationship with the United Church of God and how it has been shaped. So let's begin.

First, it is critical to understand that it is my steadfast and uncompromising belief that the United Church of God is a dedicated, Bible believing, Commandment keeping, Gospel preaching body presided over by the Lord God Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ. I am also of a deeply rooted conviction that the human instruments chosen to lead this specific community of believers are as sincere and dedicated to serving the cause of God's Kingdom as any I have ever known—and trust me, I've known many in the nearly fifty years since my baptism. On a personal note, I have NEVER been associated with one UCG minister I didn't genuinely respect—which is something I can't say about many other groups, including some who share my views concerning dining out on the Sabbath.

Furthermore, I am fully persuaded that there exists tangible evidence (fruits) that prove beyond any doubt that God is considerate of UCG's labor and is actually guiding it. To illustrate this point, consider the following examples:

## Example I A Devotion to Preserving the Truth

Since the passing of Herbert W Armstrong, God's Church has experienced an unrepresented assault on the truth he restored. Sadly, his successors shredded every vestige of his work—replacing it with an apostasy that embraces all manner of theological evil. Even sadder is the fact that the majority of Church members were actually persuaded to abandon beliefs they once cherished and return to a system totally antithetical to the scriptures. Thus, they either remained with an apostate Church or they left the faith altogether.

Thankfully, some held to the truth and walked away from an ungodly lie promulgated by enemies of the gospel. The United Church of God is one such community of believers. However, when doing so they didn't simply leave the apostasy and remain silent. They were compelled to carry on a work. As a result they began to provide sermons that spoke with deference and respect toward God's law as well as proclaim the real story surrounding the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Additionally, contrary to messages offered by the pirates who commandeered the true faith, the UCG were champions of the Sabbath and Holy Days, the nature of God, His plan regarding the destiny of His family, true grace, as well as the link between obedience and salvation, to name just a few. Furthermore, they continue to do so to this very day.

This is not to suggest that their doctrinal positions are perfect for indeed they are not. However, they are genuinely sincere in pursuing the truth and are willing to engage those who may see things differently. They certainly did so with me.

## Example II A Dedication to Proclaiming the Gospel

Today, our world is convulsing on a scale I have never witnessed in my lifetime. In the past month alone horrible carnage has been exported to Paris, France and San Bernardino, California by adherents of a poisonous faction of radical Islam. Tragically, these hate filled, blood thirsty zealots; have promised more destruction possessing an even greater magnitude. Meanwhile, war rages throughout the world and the threat of escalation seems imminent. However, this is only part of the story. Racial strife is now proliferating at unrepresented levels. In the United States images of Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland (to name just two) have ignited protests in which mobs, who have become slaves of their own bigotry, chant "What do we want? Dead cops. When do we want it? Now."

Add to that, university students, who are just a few years out of middle school, actually believe they possess the intellectual prowess as well as the emotional maturity and wisdom to define how their academic masters should comport themselves and the classes they should teach. Furthermore, when doing so these children think nothing of showing outright contempt for them

and their authority and will even resort to thuggery and intimidation to assert their will. The great prophet Isaiah once proclaimed God's pronouncement on His people and ironically described their children as "oppressors" (Isa. 3: 12).

### **Jesus Predicted this Would Happen**

When giving the Olivet Prophecy Jesus laid out a picture of life in the last days that has a striking resemblance to our world today. It included a series of warnings concerning moral, racial, religious, political, social, and environmental conditions that would grow worse in intensity until they would reach a state that would literally threaten human survival.

### **Preaching the Gospel**

Today, God's Church is acutely aware of the prophetic implications being played out in our world. However, instead of taking a message of hope and an appeal to repent, there are some prominent groups who seem more focused on questioning the legitimacy of other COG fellowships. So intense has this hostility become that there are those who unashamedly label all groups other than themselves, as being led by false prophets and apostates, even though their core doctrines are almost identical. Some have even prohibited their members from having contact with anyone, including family, who attends with another fellowship.

When it comes to the United Church of God there is a world of difference. This community refuses to take their eye off the prize that awaits God's people. To this end they work tirelessly to produce high caliber messages that speak to the world as well as the Church. In the past two months I have observed Mr. Victor Kubik write with great clarity regarding the state of a world gone mad and why God allows it to happen. His words reflected what I believe to be a perfect blend of force and compassion. I would encourage every member of God's Church to read them and share them with others. Additionally, it is my opinion that articles addressing the great perils facing our world published by the UCG are the most thoughtful produced by God's Church.

With that said, let me add that the UCG is not the slightest bit interested in the petty squabbles of many COG leaders. In truth, all God's people regardless of Church affiliation are welcome to fellowship in peace with them. It is true they have had contentious moments in their own history but they have a heart of genuine reconciliation. I have personally seen it in my own life.

## **Example III A Humility in Service**

Several years ago my family moved to Everett, Washington. It was there that we began attending UCG's Seattle congregation under the direction of Mr. Denny Luker and his wife LeAnn. These are two of the finest people I have ever known in or outside God's Church. Mr. Luker was genteel—a quiet man with uncompromising resolve. His commitment to the faith even extended to a prison ministry. My son often described him as "no wimp." Although we disagreed on certain issues we were remarkably close and respectful toward each other. The greatest tribute I could ever give to any man was extended to him. It took place when I dedicated the most important work I have ever produced—a 350 page book regarding God's plan titled *A Vision A*

*Plan and A Destiny* which can be found at <http://blowthetrumpet.org/visionplanandadestiny.htm>. Mr. Luker actually cited it in messages and even invited me to read a significant part of it to his congregation.

Mrs. Luker was the picture of grace and dignity. I once told a friend that if I was ever invited to appear before British royalty I would seek her wisdom first. To me she possesses a down to earth elegance—refined but not stuffy. Furthermore, I believe she has been a great resource to God's people in cultivating an extraordinary level of poise and strength in so many women in the Church. To me Mrs. Luker was, and is, the perfect model of a "First Lady" in a congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Luker are not the only ones who have inspired me with their example as leaders in the body of Christ. There are actually several I have been associated with in various congregations and Feast sites, not the least of which is my current pastor. The qualities he brings to his ministry are a marvelous reflection of those required of a leader in the Church (I Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). His children are a testimony to the spiritual values he cultivated in them and his ability to sustain an immensely positive relationship with his wife on both a professional and pastoral level speaks volumes regarding his faith in God, his role as a husband, his duty as a shepherd and his love toward others.

This is just a small list of reasons I deeply respect the United Church of God and am proud to be associated with them. Do I agree with everything they teach? No. But I do agree with everything they are and endeavor to be. Furthermore, I would recommend visiting a local UCG congregation to anyone seeking a spiritual family dedicated to encouraging apostolic Christianity in God's children. To me it is an Association genuinely committed to preparing a people to serve in this life and the next.

#### A Final Thought

I would like to conclude with the last words Denny Luker ever uttered to me and ironically they related to the issue of dining out on the Sabbath. He acknowledged that my position on this issue could cause some (including ministers) in God's Church to be uncomfortable and cautioned me concerning this fact. However, he also acknowledged that I had really "thought this thing out"—more so than anyone he had ever known. He even encouraged me to remain true to my convictions while at the same time to always love God and his people. He concluded with the following:

"Dennis, I do not know how this will play out, but I hope you find consolation with one thing:  
You will always be welcome in my church."

Sincerely,

Dennis Fischer