New Year’s Message
Pastor T. Petkov, American Union President, Cedartown, GA

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the American Union,

The peace of the Lord be with you! Greetings with 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

One calendar year has now ended, and a new one is beginning. People feel excited—filled with hope, new expectations, and joy. Streets and stores are decorated with joyous lights, festive colors, and bright banners; but our planet continues on as before, giving no real reason for the celebration of something new. The New Year festivities, however, are an age-old tradition. People find the sound of the word “new” especially attractive.

Everyone likes new things. New cars, new houses, new computers, and new presents make the human heart rejoice. However, the Lord offers us the greatest gift of all—a new birth and a new life—which is something really worthy of celebration. When the Spirit of God possesses our hearts and minds, He makes everything new and wonderful, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4.

“Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is, ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory.’”

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 476. Isn’t it wonderful to have this experience? What gift will give us greater joy and happiness then this? There’s even more the Lord has prepared for those who love Him and believe in Him.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 163.

Passing from the old year to the new gives us an opportunity to look back and analyze our lives. A good exercise we can try is to honestly
rank which three things had the greatest importance in our lives during the past year. Ask yourself, “Where did I invest my time, money, strength, and energy?” Pray about it, and write down the answers. Then take a moment to look into the future. What three things do you really wish to accomplish during the new year? What are your goals and dreams? Pray and write them down. In this way it is possible to trace the direction of your interests and ambitions.

It may be that after analyzing our ambitions we find they do not show God to be the center of our lives. Our seductive heart creates many excuses and justifications to defend our actions. Our pride and selfishness do not permit us to see and realize the truth. This is why David prayed, “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.” Psalm 39:4. The apostle Paul writes, “But let every man prove his own work.” Galatians 6:4. Only if we are honest with ourselves can we see the reality of our sinful natures, and only if we see that reality can we change and improve.

Painful is the experience of those who live a life of illusions and dreams only to one day collide head-on with the truth. Jesus illustrated this with the following parable: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.... And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke 18:10-14. However, if we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and willing to forgive us. The New Year gives us new opportunities.

Let us give our lives to Jesus. Let’s open the doors of our hearts and invite the Saviour of the world in.

The natural result of receiving the forgiveness of God is exceeding joy, happiness, and a desire to do the will of the Lord. “With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our cooperation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in whole-hearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God’s love. We must be laborers together with God; for God will not complete His work without human agencies.” Review and Herald, March 1, 1887.

Dear Sister, dear Brother, let’s hear the invitation of the Lord: “Arouse every spiritual energy to action. Tell those whom you visit that the end of all things is at hand. The Lord Jesus Christ will open the door of their hearts, and will make upon their minds lasting impressions. Strive to arouse men and women from their spiritual insensibility. Tell them how you found Jesus, and how blessed you have been since you gained an experience in His service. Tell them what blessing comes to you as you sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn precious lessons from His Word. Tell them of the gladness and joy there is in the Christian life. Your warm, fervent words will convince them that you have found the pearl of great price. Let your cheerful, encouraging words show that you have certainly found the higher way. This is genuine missionary work, and as it is done, many will awake as from a dream.” Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 38. “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, M y soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Hebrews 10:38-39.

I wish a blessed and happy New Year for all new creatures in the Lord Jesus. Amen!
Revelation Seminar in Cedartown, GA
Margie Seely, Cedartown, GA

The second coming of Christ, the millennium, Armageddon, and the four horsemen of Revelation meant one thing for the church in Cedartown. Pastor Henry Dering was conducting a Revelation Seminar here. For four consecutive nights our hearts thrilled at the messages delivered. Many flyers had been distributed throughout the neighborhood. Although no visitors joined us, we members and our families were able to brush up on our knowledge of these important topics. The children, especially, listened with rapt attention as each subject was carefully explained and illustrated with PowerPoint. Some even wrote down notes during the lectures so they could better remember the messages.

Not only was this seminar delivered live to the members of the Cedartown church, but it was also broadcast on the Internet via the General Conference website.

We thank God for the work of Pastor Henry Dering. We also encourage other churches to hold a Revelation Seminar. It may not draw a multitude of visitors, but it will prove to be a blessing to YOU.

Cedartown’s Gifts in Kind Program
Margie Seely, Cedartown, GA

The Cedartown church has a unique missionary outreach program. The church has partnered with Home Depot with their Gifts in Kind program to offer free home-improvement products to lower-income residents of this community. This is how it works.

Home Depot sets aside a variety of products (display and/or overstocked items) and calls the Cedartown church to come and pick up them up. The Cedartown church collects the items and stores them in a garage on the church property. The church can either use those items for its own purposes, since it is a nonprofit organization, or give them away to the community. The church may not sell the items.

On Wednesday, December 21, 2011, the Cedartown church opened its doors to the community. Thirty-five families (approximately 100 people) participated.
Missionary students met with each interested family, took down their contact information, and confirmed their eligibility to participate in this program, then led them out to the garage. Participants were allowed to choose eight items per family. Available items ranged from rakes to watering cans, toilet seats to tiles, mirrors to showerheads. Not only did each family go home with valuable, brand-new Home Depot items, but they also received a free Steps to Christ magazine from us. One lady even asked the missionary student assisting her to autograph her copy.

A reporter from the Cedartown Standard covered this story and placed it on the front page of the newspaper. A few days later, Pastor Idel Suárez spoke with a man in Cedartown’s planning department over the telephone. When Pastor Suárez gave his name, the man said, “I know you.” Pastor Suárez did not recognize the man’s name, but the man continued. “I have heard about what your church is doing here. I want to thank you for how you are helping this community.”

If your church is interested in starting its own Gifts in Kind program (there are other companies besides Home Depot that participate), visit www.giftsinkind.com for more information. May we always strive to be a blessing to the community we live in. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16.

Page 3 Photos: (Top) Cedartown Church; (bottom) Missionary student Danny Ramirez (far left) assists participants as they browse through the merchandise.
Page 4 Photo: Missionary student Richard Eaton helps load a participant’s car.

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2012 Calendar

• April 4-8: American Youth Conference in Puerto Rico. Registration deadline is February 1. Contact George Williams for more information at gawr777@yahoo.com.
• April 10: Missionary Seminar Field Training begins
• June: General Conference Session, South Africa (details coming soon!)
• July 26-28: Missionary Seminar Graduation and Evangelistic Event