

# Together

## Grace Communion International News

April/May 2010

www.wcg.org/together/

Volume 5, Number 2

## Sharing the Good News in 2009: a Media Report

GCI headquarters serves the denomination in many ways. Much of the work directly supports local congregations in their pastoral, accounting, and legal needs. Another important aspect of the work in Glendora is done by the Media Department. Here are some details for the year 2009:

### Publications

In 2009 GCI Media published five issues of *Christian Odyssey*—almost 78,000 copies. The magazine’s mission, as seen in its masthead, is “Exploring Life and Faith.” We feature articles on practical Christian living, explanations of basic beliefs of the Christian faith, with Bible studies, book reviews, interviews, and other interesting and practical helps for Christian life.

Our current circulation is about

### In this issue...

- Becoming community-based . . . . . 5
- Announcements. . . . . 8

15,000—plus another 2,500 in Australia—but the value of *Odyssey* extends far beyond the printed copies. That’s because our previous issues continue to be available for the general public on our website, and search engines enable thousands of people to make

into a search engine, our website will be on the first page of results.

Our second-most popular article is “Evidence of Black Africans in the Bible,” which we printed in 2007.

If people search for “blacks in the bible,” which many do, our article is likely to be at the very top of

the list. The third

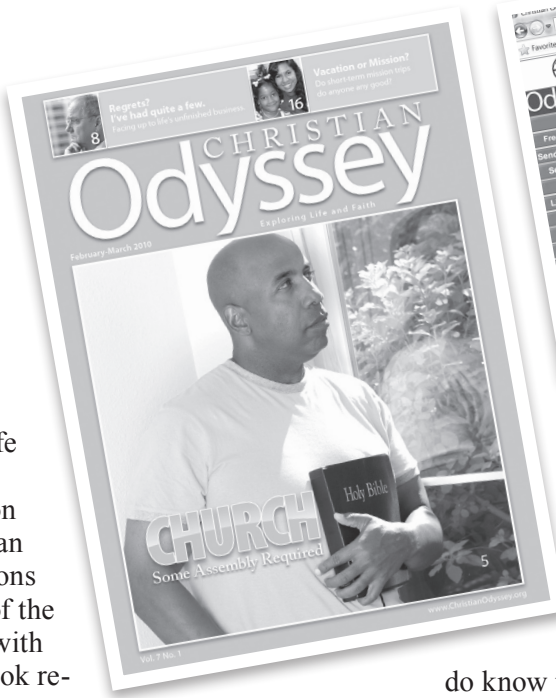
article is “Easter in the Church,” from 2006.

The most popular article published in 2009 was “Creation and Evolution,” in the February-March issue, followed closely by the cover article of the next issue: “We say goodbye, but

use of the resources we have. Exact user statistics are impossible to obtain for the website, but we

do know that *Odyssey* web pages were viewed more than 700,000 times.

The most popular article is “The Apostles’ Creed,” published in 1999, viewed 29,000 times. Most of these visitors find out about the article from search engines—if they type “the apostles’ creed”



Apr-May 2010 Vol. 5, No. 2  
Circulation 9,500

**Together: Grace Communion International News** (ISSN 1937-4992) is published five times each year. Copyright © 2010 Grace Communion International. All rights reserved. Subscriptions are sent automatically to contributing members of Grace Communion International who live in the United States.

For changes of address, phone 1-800-924-4644.

### Editor

Michael Morrison  
michael.morrison@gci.org

**Published by Grace Communion International**  
Living and Sharing the Gospel

### President

Joseph Tkach

### Vice President

J. Michael Feazell

**Superintendent of U.S. Ministers**  
Dan Rogers

If you would like to support this ministry, send your tax-deductible donation to Grace Communion International, P.O. Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740-0730. For FedEx or UPS deliveries, send to Grace Communion International, 2011 E. Financial Way, Glendora, CA 91741-4602.

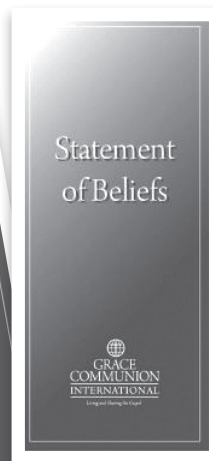
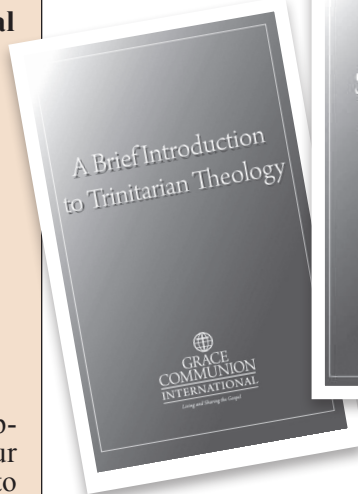
To submit an article for *Together*, send it by email to michael.morrison@gci.org, or by U.S. mail to P.O. Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740. If you want an article or photo returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

then what happens when we die?"

We published six issues of *Together: Grace Communion International News*, for a total of 64,000 copies. There were 61,000 pages viewed on the *Together* section of our website. The most commonly viewed file was the PDF format of the July issue—many people wanted the entire issue.

We published 12 letters from Joseph Tkach, which were sent to donors, for a total of about 79,000 letters.

We also published two booklets: *Statement of Beliefs of Grace*



*Communion International*, and *A Brief Introduction to Trinitarian Theology*. These were sent to all members, and the theology booklet is being promoted on our video programs.

### Website

Although the website is in the domain of the Informational Technology department, much of the content of the website is produced by the Media Department. (The website is in the process of being redesigned, and www.gci.org will soon be our official domain, although it will take many months to move all the articles to the new location.) Here are the 2009 sta-



istics for www.wcg.org:

There were 2 million visits, during which a total of 9 million pages were viewed. The busiest month was April; the busiest day of the week was Tuesday. Most of the visitors were from the United States, followed by Australia, Canada, Germany, Britain, and South Africa. Most visitors used Internet

Explorer, but 25 percent used Firefox, and 7 percent used Safari. Nearly half of the visitors came from search engines; 43 percent went directly to the site. Eight percent came from other websites, such as www.biblical-art.com.

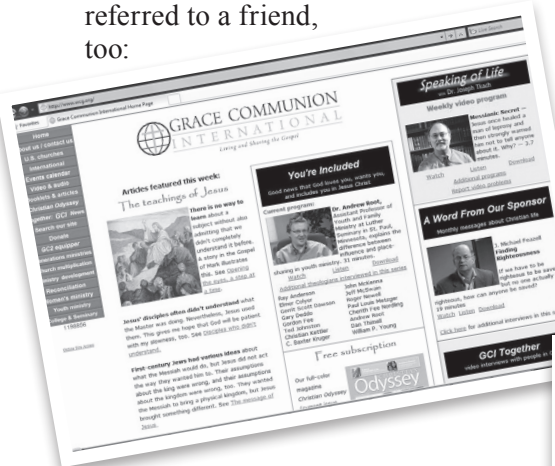
The most popular articles are shown in the box below. It is interesting that the top two are about women. Many people find our site by searching for “book of ruth” or “proverbs 31.”

The website also provides visitors

### Our Most Popular Articles (most popular on top)

- Exploring the Book of Ruth
- Proverbs 31: Portrait of a Godly Woman
- Parable of the Lost Son
- Why Did Jesus Have to Die?
- Introduction to the Book of Acts
- What Is Worship? A Survey of Scripture
- Transformed by Christ: A Brief History of Grace Communion International
- The Date of Jesus' Birth
- The Present and Future Kingdom of God
- The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11
- Where Was Golgotha?
- Jesus and Women
- Responding to God with Faith
- Illustrations From *The Bible and Its Story*

with an easy way to refer an article to a friend. The number of people using this feature has doubled in the past year. As we might expect, the most popular articles are frequently the most-recommended ones, but other articles are commonly referred to a friend, too:



- What the Bible Says About Wine
- What the Bible Says About Speaking in Tongues
- Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15)
- Is Tithing Required in the New Covenant?
- Should Christians Celebrate Halloween?
- Alphabetical List of Articles on This Site
- Getting a Grip on Repentance
- Is the Sabbath Required for Christians Today?
- How to Resist Temptation



- Speaking of Life**  
(top ten programs of 2009)
- Beginning of Time
  - Six-Day Creation
  - New Names
  - Universalism
  - Christmas
  - Satan
  - Trinitarian Theology
  - God Knows You
  - Creator of Evolution?
  - The Stuff Inside

- Fasting: A Small Group Discussion Guide
- To see what is new on our website, go to [www.wcg.org/new.htm](http://www.wcg.org/new.htm)—or sign up for our weekly email at [www.wcg.org/weeklyupdate.htm](http://www.wcg.org/weeklyupdate.htm).

**Electronic media**

Our video department, with a staff of only two people, produces four video series, plus a variety of other electronic media products.



C. Baxter Kruger, founder of Perichoresis, and Jeff McSwain, founder of Reality Ministries in North Carolina.



*Speaking of Life*, a weekly series of short messages by Joseph Tkach, had 52 new programs. They, and the previous programs still on the website, were accessed 134,000 times. The program viewed most often in its first eight weeks was “Beginning of Time,” which noted that both the Bible and science say that time had a beginning.

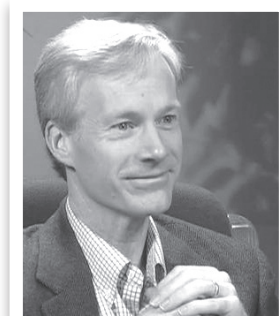
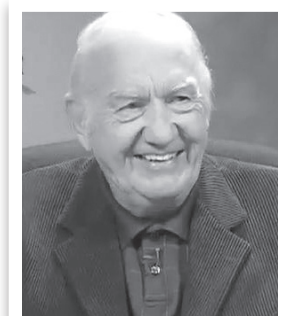
Almost 30 percent of the users preferred the audio version; about 9 percent downloaded a file to create a DVD copy—perhaps to share the

program with friends who do not have internet access. You can see the options at [www.speakingoflife.org](http://www.speakingoflife.org).

*You're Included* is the next-most popular video program—it features half-hour interviews with Christian leaders, writers and theologians. In 2009, we added 19 programs, including interviews with Elmer Colyer, Gerrit Scott Dawson, Gary Deddo, Gordon Fee, Ted Johnston, Christian Kettler, Jeff McSwain, Paul Louis Metzger, Roger Newell, Cherith Fee Nordling, Andrew Root, and Dan Thimell.

The most popular program, as measured by the number of viewers in the first eight weeks, was Gordon Fee, followed by Gerrit Scott Dawson and then Gordon Fee’s daughter, Cherith Fee Nordling. We continue to get a good number of views on our 2008 interviews with William Young, author of *The Shack*. About 33 percent of users chose to listen; 8 percent downloaded the DVD file.

We conducted several more interviews in February 2010 at a conference in Scotland, and we plan to



**You're Included:** Gordon Fee, emeritus professor of New Testament at Regent College; Gerrit Scott Dawson, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Cherith Fee Nordling, of Antioch Leadership Network in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

share those programs with you on a bi-weekly basis. To see all of them, go to [www.youreincluded.org](http://www.youreincluded.org).

*GCI Together* is a series of interviews with personnel in GCI, including mission developers in other nations. We posted one program each month, featuring the following people: Randy Bloom, Charles Fleming, James Henderson, Ted Johnston, Santiago Lange, Curtis May, John McLean, Gary Moore, Mat Morgan, Michael Morrison, Pat Shaw, and Tammy Tkach. People watched or listened to these programs more than 18,000 times. See [www.wcg.org/av/GCIT.htm](http://www.wcg.org/av/GCIT.htm).



CAD Budget Analyst Pat Shaw.

In late August, we also began posting on the website a series called *A Word From Our Sponsor*. This is a series of messages from the Bible ranging in length from 15 to 30 minutes, given by J. Michael Feazell, Dan Rogers, and Michael Morrison. The first four programs logged a total of 8,000 uses. See [www.wcg.org/av/MiscVid.htm](http://www.wcg.org/av/MiscVid.htm).

### Our goal

The motto of Grace Communion International is “living and sharing the gospel.” Our publications and our electronic media serve as resources for members, pastors, and the general public to help people come to a better understanding of God’s unconditional love for us manifest in Jesus Christ and ministered to us through the Holy Spirit. In as many ways as possible, we want to make the good news easy to understand and easy to share.

*Michael Morrison*

## Feedback From the Users

We send out a short email to about 4,500 people every week letting them know what is new on our website. Because so many people have this email address, we get a lot of email in return. Some of it is in response to materials we have placed on our website. Here are some recent comments:

I’m very happy to read your document. My skill in English is not well, but with an English-Vietnamese dictionary, I can understand what you want to share. We need this knowledge in building our church, a small church in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Would you please continue sharing your experience to us?

A thousand kudos to the staff, who faithfully serve all of us each week. I look forward to every Friday morning’s updated GCI webpages, which keep our local congregation “connected.” They start my day in preparing our Sunday bulletins. And, f.y.i., the *Speaking of Life* programs are also regular features during worship services. My sincere appreciation and thanks to you all.

We are focusing this year on our use of the Apostles’ Creed during Lent at our Presbyterian Church in North Carolina, a congregation of 250 worshippers. Through a Google search I came across your website and I would like to reprint the article on the Apostles’ Creed, pointing people to your website, of course. I appreciate the article’s simplicity and utility.

We’d like permission to re-print 10 copies of “Church: Some Assembly Required” for our church leaders. This article will help us, as seven leaders have left our church for conflict reasons. I’d love to share this article with the bishop and leaders. Thanks.

I would like to print the article “Black History Month: An Interview with Curtis May,” for my church students. We are studying black history, and I think they perhaps should understand the origin of black history month.

I work with CBN Asia in the Philippines. I would like to ask if it is possible, with your permission, to use the image “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5:1) in one of our fundraising premiums to our donors.

I am a chaplain for the Veterans Healthcare System in Arkansas. I read your pamphlet entitled, “Five Simple Rules for Bible Study” and found it to be uncomplicated and very understandable. We often have veterans here who have made a commitment to Christ, but don’t know where to go from there. How can I get copies of your pamphlet that I can give them?

I am the chair of the outreach committee at our church. Can we use your article “Sharing Your Faith” in our church bulletin? We’d like to make 150 copies. Thank you for posting it on the internet!

I was reading the article on your website entitled, “Growing in Christ.” I would like to make 20 copies of this article for our discipleship program attendees. I like to provide them with a Christian help each week and I thought this article would be very helpful. These would be given out free of charge.

# Becoming a community-based church

By Ken Williams, GCI regional pastoral leader

The new GCI-USA motto, “From union to communion: Making disciples with Jesus,” speaks to our active participation in what Jesus is doing in the Spirit to fulfill the Father’s mission. A growing number of our congregations are seeing how this participation includes joining Jesus in ministering to the unchurched community near their place of worship. By doing so, they are becoming community-based. Let me share some of what they are learning.

All the congregations I’ll mention are reaching out with God’s love to unchurched people in the nearby community—helping them experience God’s love, hear the gospel of God’s grace, and come to trust in Jesus their Savior. Because of this outreach, most of these churches are experiencing community-based conversion growth, evidenced by the baptism of new members from within their community.

In some cases, congregations have moved their place of meeting to be within the communities they feel called by God to serve. Grace Communion Fellowship (GCF) in Tampa, FL, and Community Christian Fellowship (CCF) in Houston, TX, are considering such a move.

Elder Elly Kurzawa leads GCF members every week in providing bag lunches and prayer requests for 50 to 80 homeless people in Tampa. Senior pastor Mark Mounts and his CCF team are consulting with Houston Urban Renewal leadership and other community services, seeking a place to meet near the homeless they serve in Houston.

Other congregations are already in the communities they have learned to serve.

- Senior Pastor Sam Butler and his team at New Life in Christ in Grand Rapids, MI, provide a monthly personal care items pantry for their community.

- Senior pastor James Lewis and his team at New Covenant Fellowship in Montgomery, AL, are providing weekly worship services for 15 children and some of their families in the community.
- Elders Sarah Faulkner, Bonny McQueary, and Hugh Steinginga and the ministry outreach team of Abundant Grace Fellowship in Ft. Meyers, FL, serve meals and the gospel to scores of homeless every week.
- Senior Pastor Harry Kall and his team at Good Shepherd Church of God in Cicero, IL, serve community youth during their weekly worship service and on Friday nights.
- Senior Pastor Leonard Banks and his team at Abundant Grace Church in Charlotte, NY, provide bi-weekly worship services and a food cupboard to the unchurched in the neighborhoods near their meeting location.
- Senior Pastor Frank Howard and his team at 24/7 Community Church in Newark, NJ, serve youth, homeless, elderly, and the unemployed in the neighborhoods around their place of meeting.

All these congregations started as commuter churches, most meeting in locations central to their commuting members. While this was a valid approach at the time, these congregations came to see another need. It started when they began to consider what Jesus is up to in their communities and how they might participate with him. They assessed what the Spirit had given them to give to others; they considered who these “others” are, and then which communities these “others” reside in. They sought ways to make friends in that locale, with those people, by providing needed services using the resources given them by the

Spirit. As God provided opportunity, they then shared the gospel with these new friends.

Following Jesus in this way is not a church-growth scheme, or a mere program. Rather, it is participation in the ongoing patterns of Jesus’ missional life—a life into which the Spirit draws us as followers (disciples) of Jesus. The deep desire of these congregations has been to help these children of God in tangible ways, and as God leads, to provide them with a church home where they can participate in the body of Christ.

The growth God has given has presented these churches with new challenges. Their leaders share with us that they now need a clear disciple-making pathway that enables new believers to become workers in the ministry that Jesus is doing in and through the congregation out to the community. All these congregations are praying for more workers as they feel stretched to the limit. Please join them in praying that the Lord of the Harvest will send more workers, some who will become leaders. It’s a continuing journey with Jesus!

If your congregation has similar experience with the unchurched community near your place of meeting, we’d love to hear about it. Please send your story to [Ted.Johnston@gci.org](mailto:Ted.Johnston@gci.org). We’ll share these stories in future articles.



Christmas event in Rochester, NY



## Church-Next Training

Church Administration & Development is glad to announce the Church-Next Training schedule for 2010. Church-Next Training is Trinitarian-based and designed to introduce pastors and other ministry leaders to the key principles and processes for starting healthy new congregations in GCI.

This year Church-Next Training will be conducted in two sessions at two locations.

- Part 1: April 8-10, in Tipp City, OH
- Part 2: September 9-11, in Staten Island, NY

Materials discussed in Part 1 will not be duplicated in Part 2. Both sessions combine to provide the entire training experience. The time between each part is to be used to apply lessons learned.

Church-Next Training is also for pastors, ministry leaders and members working together for church health and renewal. CNT is also ideal training for young and emerging ministry leaders.

Church-Next Training includes:

- Trinitarian principles and practices for participating in Jesus' mission
- Church planting values
- Clarifying and communicating a vision for church planting
- Identifying a focus group or community
- Developing a church planting team
- Developing culturally relevant ministries and worship services
- Trinitarian-based evangelism, gathering people
- ... and more

For more information and to register, visit [cmm.gci.org](http://cmm.gci.org) or contact Randy Bloom at [Randy.Bloom@gci.org](mailto:Randy.Bloom@gci.org).

## Having a Blast in the Snow

Snowblast 2010 at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville, MN, was enjoyed by 65 people of all ages from Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota. The event began Saturday noon (Jan. 16) and ended Monday morning, the 18th.

The theme this year centered on freedom, making choices, and the consequences of those freedoms and

choices on us and others. We noted that the themes of freedom and choices



are evident in all the stories in the Bible. Those stories also remind us that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

are constantly at work to redeem and transform our poor choices to include us in the freedom they have always had. These topics were discussed in several messages, dorm chats, and Christian Living sessions.

Other activities included snow tubing, snow shoeing, making pottery on a pottery wheel, arts and crafts, making peanut brittle, photography, practicing worship leading, playing cards, board games, as well as horse rides in an indoor arena and a night-time sleigh ride courtesy of

two draft horses, "Bill and Barney."

Recent heavy snowfall made the scenery a winter wonderland. Fog early each morning further coated the trees with magnificent ice crystals. Truly a masterpiece done by the Master!

*Doug Johannsen*

## School and Church in Columbia

In Barranquilla, on the Caribbean coast of Columbia, a GCI congregation meets in Gimnasio La Rivera School (see photos at right). The school is 25 years old and educates some 260 students from pre-school, elementary, high school and basic technical levels every year. Sonia Orozco de Vengoechea (pastor of the congregation) founded the school in 1984, and has been the principal



since then. The school serves families who are in the lower or middle socioeconomic levels.

For various reasons, the school does not participate in government financial aid. We sustain ourselves with God's help, with some small contributions from parents, and a few students in some classes.

From the school's scarce resources, it scholarships some of the more needy children. The beautiful and important thing is that some of these have become Christians, since in



Some of the children in Barranquilla, Columbia. Below, a vendor passing by listens to the meeting.



the school we plant the seeds of the gospel in the young children, teenagers, teachers, parents, relatives and friends.

For me as principal of the school and pastor of the church in Soledad, in the metropolitan area of Barranquilla, Colombia, it is a challenge and an interesting experience. My experience here has been as teacher, mother, counselor, friend, and evangelist...thanks be to God for this wonderful opportunity!

*Sonia Orozco de Vengoechea*

### Outreach in New Jersey

The photos at right show the Newark GCI "24/7" congregation in three aspects of its ministry to connect with the surrounding community. The top photo is of a recent MLK work party, the second is a nursing home outreach, and the third (far right) is a community coffee house. It includes an open microphone where unchurched and church community members can share their musical talents.



### Fortieth Anniversary in Kalamazoo, MI

The congregation in Kalamazoo, MI, celebrated its 40th anniversary on Nov. 14, 2009. The church began in December 1969 with George Meeker as the pastor.

There were 100 in attendance from various churches, including two past ministers: Wilhelm Mandel and Ken Williams. Mr. Mandel gave a message on friendships and how they are formed and maintained.

Mr. Williams, now a regional pastoral leader based in New York, who served for nine years in our area, gave the main message, "Finding where God is working and become a part of it."

For special music, Cheryl Erickson sang "I will sing a new song."



A luncheon and program followed. Art Thomas, assistant pastor, was the Master of Ceremonies. Cas-sady Haines read our history, and long-time member Twila Jones read a poem. Cleophus Sturdivant sang "He." Catharine Sturdivant did a praise dance to "Holy Spirit Fall on Us." Cleophus and Catharine also did as the closing number "I Bow My Knee."

Roger Abels is presently the pastor. The church is involved with building schools in Ghana, The Voice of the Martyrs, several outreach programs and donations to various charitable organizations, including overseas missions.

*Cleophus & Catharine Sturdivant*

### Teen Featured in Local Paper

Thanks to Lisa Rose of *The Star-Ledger*, an excellent article was published in the Dec. 27, 2009 Sunday edition about Nicole Thompson, who has a bright future ahead of her. She is 17 and a high school senior with a 4.0 grade point average. She has

been attending 24-7 Community Church in Newark, NJ, with her mother and three sisters since she was 7 years old. She was baptized in November 2009.

See the *Together* website for a link to the article about her: [www.wcg.org/together/](http://www.wcg.org/together/).

*Franklin K. Howard*



# Announcements

## Ordinations

Teresita Asuit, Quezon City, Philippines  
 John Barry, Sr., Green River, WY  
 Emilio Cabigao, Bulacan, Philippines  
 Emmanuel Clifford, Cape Town North, South Africa  
 Bernardo Cuizon, Mindoro, Philippines  
 Adriano Ducay, Manila South, Philippines  
 Martin Estong, Baguio City, Philippines  
 Shaun De Greeff, Cape Town North, South Africa  
 James Lambu, Birmingham, England  
 Lynn Lawrence, Montreal, Quebec  
 Papike Lebelo, Johannesburg, South Africa  
 Luzviminda Pangilinan, Quezon City, Philippines  
 Solomon Rosario, Puerto Princesa, Philippines  
 David Stonesifer, Baltimore, MD  
 Aron Tolentino, Metro Manila, Philippines  
 Bill Tollner, Athens, GA  
 Eric Wilding, Toronto East, Ontario  
 Michael Wyatt-Paige, Phoenix, AZ

## Obituaries

**Zola Mae (North) Artis**, 69, passed away Dec. 24, 2009, in Wallisville, TX, after a lengthy illness. She was born August 4, 1940 in Wallisville. On Sept. 2, 1955, Zola married her loving husband Wallace Artis Sr. They were members of the Christ Communion Church in Beaumont, TX.

She will be deeply missed by her husband, Wallace, eight children, 29 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

**Arthur Earl Fischer**, 58, died of liver failure after a long illness on March 18, 2009, in Van Nuys, CA.

**Ivory Williams Sr.**, 74, died Dec. 18, 2009 after a long struggle with cancer. He was a member of the Fellowship of Grace Church (Lake Charles, LA) congregation since 1983.

He was born Dec. 24, 1934. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Audry Madison Williams. He is survived by four daughters: Rosette Ann Sullivan, Irish Marie Washington, and Hannah and Bonnie Williams; and three sons: Patrick Karl, Ricky Charles, and Ivory Jr.; two brothers and eight grandchildren.

## Conference Update

**GCI invites all pastors, elders, ministry leaders and members to the international conference in Orlando, Florida, July 22-25.**

**Speakers include Joseph Tkach, J. Michael Fezell, Dan Rogers, Elmer Colyer, Cathy and Gary Deddo, and Ed Stetzer — plus much more! For details on the conference, see <http://2010.gci.org>.**

## The Trinity: More Than a Doctrine

Have you ever wondered why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important to Christian faith?

After all, most people seem to think of God as a single, solitary being somewhere in the vast recesses of space—not as three in one and one in three.

You might remember Bette Midler's song, "From a Distance," which has the chorus, "God is watching us, from a distance."

That's how most people think of God. He's way up there in the sky, looking down on humanity. He might be an angry judge, racking up a tally sheet of our sins, or a kindly old gentleman with a flowing white beard, who sometimes steps in to help out if we make enough noise for him to hear us.

But the God of the Bible is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet one God, perfect in unity, communion, and love.

"So what?" you ask. What does that have to do with me?

Just this. The fact that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three means that Jesus Christ and the Father are not separate Gods. And that means you don't ever have to worry about what God thinks about you, or what is going to happen to you when you die.

And that's because, as Jesus Christ put it in John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of the Father.

If you want to know what the Father is like, or how the Father thinks about humanity, or about you, you only have to look at Christ, because he shows us what the Father is like. And the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, ministers to us the confidence, hope, courage, love and power that we have in Christ.

When the Bible talks about us being "in Christ," it means that we share in the relationship Jesus has with the Father. Just as Jesus is the beloved of the Father, so we too, because we are "in Christ," are also the beloved of the Father.

We know the Father loves us, because we know from the Bible that Jesus the Son loves us.

That's why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important. It lets us know exactly where we stand with God the Father, because since the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, where we stand with Jesus is where we stand with the Father.

*Joseph Tkach*