You've Got Mail

A Kingdom Pictures Release "YOU'VE GOT MAIL" A KINGDOM NEWS NETWORK PRODUCTION

Featuring: Kip McKean • Russ Ewell • Sekimura Hayato
Byron & Brittney Dixon • Elbert & Jena Smith • Vincent

Produced by Al Baird Directed by Roger Lamb Screenplay by Marcia Lamb, MaryAnn Rose & Robin Fawcett Production Designer Emily Bringardner
You’ve Got Mail

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”
- Matthew 10:16

The Internet is the fastest-growing and most powerful communication medium in history. If you exit the information superhighway for a few months, you may not recognize it when you return. The growth rate of the Internet is astounding. It took 38 years for radio to reach 50 million homes in this country. Television did the same in 13 years. The Internet has done it in only five years! The World Wide Web (referred to as the WWW or just “the Web”) is doubling its number of websites every six months. To get on the information superhighway, all one needs is a computer, a modem and an Internet service provider. Millions of people visit Cyberspace every day to bank online, pay bills, find a job, buy or sell almost anything (even pizza or groceries), book travel, track a FedEx package, find computer programs to do nearly anything, make free international phone calls, play games, find computer programs to do nearly anything, listen to and even watch live events, buy or lease real estate, take college courses, trace their family tree, correspond with people around the world and do thousands of other things. Every day new, innovative uses are being implemented.

We realize the tremendous potential of the Internet to help the Kingdom. Early in 1996 with the help of Russ Ewell and the great San Francisco Church, we launched our first website (www.intfcc.org). Entrusted to KNN in 1997, that website became www.icoc.org. In just two years that one website (which now gets over 1,300 visitors a day) has multiplied into 55 official church websites all over the world. In addition to these official websites, countless personal sites hosted by disciples are springing up everywhere. I hope that someday soon tens of thousands of these personal websites will be found all over the Internet. Disciples will be able to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to share personal victory stories of how the transforming power of God has changed their lives.

The Internet not only provides opportunity for great good, but Satan uses it to spread his poison. Cyberspace is the Wild, Wild West. Few rules exist. There are no national boundaries. No one “runs the show.” A kook with his own warped agenda has just as loud a voice as the president of a corporation. The single largest group of websites on the Internet deals in pornography and is the biggest moneymaker. I strongly recommend that every disciple install a filter program on his/her computer, such as SurfWatch™ or CYBERsitter™ to block pornographic material from the Internet. Not only is this a serious risk to our children, but the temptation can be just too great for us as disciples. (I have dealt with many cases of disciples watching pornography via the Internet.) Chatrooms provide opportunity to remain anonymous and form dangerous friendships that can lead to “cybersex” and even set up real encounters leading to adultery. Sites of hate groups are growing at alarming rates.

Thomas Macaulay, a British historian, said, “The measure of a man’s real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out.” Nowhere is that more true than the Internet. A person can bring into the privacy of his home evils that were never before possible. Even “spiritual pornography” has found its way onto the information superhighway. Instead of building lives for God, enemies of the church and disgruntled former members are uniting to attack the Kingdom and destroy people’s faith. They present their “facts” and their “stories” in such a way as to picture the church as an abusive, authoritative, greedy and evil cult. Of course, the danger in reading such material is that only one side is presented in personal stories of hurt, and no way exists to ever learn the other side. And we all know what the wise Solomon said, “The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him” (Proverbs 18:17). I wonder what would have been said about Jesus on the Internet if it had existed in his lifetime.

God and Satan often use the same instruments for their purposes. The Internet has unlimited potential for good. This issue of LA Story will give you a glimpse of the good that can result. But its possibilities for evil are scary. For good or for evil, I believe that God is opening doors of incredible opportunity for us as disciples to spread the gospel faster. We will take the initiative. We can afford to do no less. We’ve all got mail.

Kingdom News Network would like to welcome two additions to the staff. Bart Myers (left) and Marc Gaspard (right). Bart, a graduate of Boston University with a Masters in Educational Media and Technology, was hired in March as KNN’s Operations Manager. Baptized in 1984 in San Jose, Costa Rica, Bart, along with his wife Becky, helped to plant the Mexico City Church in 1987 and has led two churches in Central and South America. Marc, a website and CD-ROM Project Manager joined KNN in April as the Online Producer for the ICOC, IACC and Teen websites. He will also serve in coordinating the Online Producers in each World Sector. Mark and his wife Janet were converted in the Los Angeles AMS ministry.
The Kingdom’s Superhighway

by Roger Lamb, ICOC Director of Media

“A voice of one calling: . . . make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” – Isaiah 40:3

Like a modern-day prophet in the Kingdom of God, Russ Ewell called out from the technological wilderness of the Silicon Valley. In 1996, Russ sounded the trumpet, drawing our attention to the importance of the Internet for world evangelism. Most of us were still envisioning spiders when we thought about the World Wide Web. Kip McKean, World Missions Lead Evangelist, and Al Baird, Media/Law World Sector Leader, heard the call. They entrusted Russ and the high-tech disciples of the San Francisco Church to develop the Kingdom’s very first website, which debuted as www.intlcc.com on March 29, 1996.

In order to better access the information from around the Kingdom, the International Churches of Christ website was made a part of Kingdom News Network (KNN), the official media arm of our churches. It now became possible to teach the message of discipleship across every border of the world. When the new official IOOC website (www.icoc.org) debuted at the 1997 World Leadership Conference in Jerusalem, every English-speaking church with over 250 disciples and every non-English speaking church with over 500 disciples was challenged to post a website on the Internet. We now have 55 sites that exist around the world.

Those not yet on the information superhighway may wonder what the big fuss is about. Please notice the sample of global feedback comments to the www.icoc.org site printed on pages 6 and 7. Incredibly, in the month of April alone, this one site averaged 1,319 user sessions per day. And the average user stays on our site for almost nine minutes. Note the substantial content of our site: Kip McKean’s article “Restoration Through Revolution,” the First Principles study series, a summary of our convictions, testimonials, a world directory, growth charts, history, and links to all the official sites of other churches in the Kingdom.

Through the vision of Mike Taliaferro, Africa Geographic Sector Leader, the Johannesburg International Church of Christ initiated the ACES World Sector official site (www.acesonline.org) in December of 1998. This site is not only updated daily with Kingdom news, but it also sends daily e-mails to subscribers announcing what is new on their site. In addition, World Sector Leaders, Evangelists, Teachers, Elders, and others post articles that share their insights with the Kingdom and the world. To the Kingdom, the ACES site is like a daily newspaper and the ICOC site is like a weekly magazine. Reporting on much of the same news, they have different purposes and often different audiences.

No one knows exactly where the Internet will lead. We do know that it will affect every person on the planet in some way in the future. More importantly, we do know our mission – to seek and save the lost. And we know the Kingdom superhighway leads to heaven.
The Kingdom of God is on the cutting edge of the Internet. With growth rapidly as we expand. Listed here is a sampling of them on the “Other Sites” page of the www.icoc.org we...

Kingdom Websites

www.bostoncoc.org

www.icoc.org/uk/london

www.intlcc.com/sf

www.dc.icoc.org

www.losangeles.icoc.org

www.icmar.org.mx

www.chicagochurch.org

www.icoc.org.br

CONNECTING PEOPLE AROUND

Kingdom Sites

www.icoc.org
Websites by Disciples

Check out these websites by disciples! These are not part of the official sites of the International Churches of Christ, but they are just a few that are operated by disciples around the world covering a variety of subjects.

A webring connecting sites by disciples:
www.mindspring.com/~carrowood/icocwr/

A site for athletes:
www.theteam.org

A site on Christian evidences:
www.ceegod.org

A chat room for disciples:
www.members.tripod.com/~knetonline/
I was baptized into Christ!

I went to my first service. After four weeks of Bible study on the ICOC website directory and one week later, the telephone number of the Amsterdam Church opened my eyes and accept God's love. I looked up my doubts. Her gentle response forced me to turn my back on God. So, I checked out the Kingdom websites to help me. Within a few days, I received an e-mail message with some of my questions. I purposely wrote my note disrespectfully to test their willingness to help me. Within a few days, I received an e-mail from Lisa Holman of KNN. She cleared up some of the suspicions.

In the following months, I studied the Bible with some of the disciples. But there were many things that did not make sense to me. Instead of asking for an explanation, I allowed them to be an excuse to say, "I don't believe."

After returning to Holland, I decided that if someone could answer my questions I would stop turning my back on God. So, I checked out the ICOC homepage (www.icoc.org) and sent a feedback message with some of my questions. I purposely wrote my note disrespectfully to test their willingness to help me. Within a few days, I received an e-mail address to apologize, Elbert discovered the ICOC website. The website helped Elbert to see the big picture of God's Kingdom. Elbert and Jena were restored to their relationship with God in November 1998. The news traveled quickly to the Oahu Church and in one day Elbert had 30 e-mail messages from rejoicing disciples. Elbert and Corey are also mending their relationship. The Smiths and their three sons are now a spiritually strong family.

Sekimura Hayato, a disciple in the Tokyo Church of Christ, is a systems engineer for one of the main long distance telephone companies in Japan. Wanting to help advance God's Kingdom, he constructed a personal Internet homepage containing good news from the church and a link to the Tokyo Church's website. So far, 15 people have visited services and two people have become disciples as a result of both of the sites.

One of the new Christians, Endo Masashi, lived near the church building and was even invited by disciples several times but never attended services. While surfing the Net, Endo was led by God to Sekimura's homepage. Deciding this was not a coincidence, he came to church the following Sunday, studied the Bible, and two weeks later was baptized into Christ. Since then, Endo has helped his friend Hamatani Yasuhiko become a disciple. God is continuing to use Sekimura's homepage to bring people to the Kingdom of God.

Elbert and Jena Smith became disciples in Oahu, Hawaii, in June of 1995. Just before his military transfer to Groton, Connecticut, Elbert had a conflict with another brother in the church, Corey, and allowed a sinful attitude toward him to fester. The transfer became an excuse to leave without working things out. The Smiths relocated to Groton without returning to church. Exactly one year later, Elbert was met by a disciple, Wilford, but declined his invitation.

Three months later, the still-frustrated couple talked and prayed about returning to church. Later that day, they "coincidentally" encountered Wilford again. Convicted, Elbert and Jena decided to recommit to God.

While searching the Internet for Corey's e-mail address to apologize, Elbert discovered the ICOC website. The website helped Elbert to see the big picture of God's Kingdom. Elbert and Jena were restored to their relationship with God in November 1998. The news traveled quickly to the Oahu Church and in one day Elbert had 30 e-mail messages from rejoicing disciples. Elbert and Corey are also mending their relationship. The Smiths and their three sons are now a spiritually strong family.

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CURRENT RELEASES

Victory in the Midst of War

ZAGREB, CROATIA - Surrounded by the tension of war in the former Yugoslavia, disciples devoted themselves to great prayers of faith and God brought victory in Croatia. For their first Women’s Day in Zagreb, the 20 women disciples had 65 women in attendance to hear Nina Widmer, Women’s Leader in Poland, speak. The following Sunday, two men and one woman were baptized into Christ. The Zagreb Church is led by Chad and Mara Winchell. Let us continue to pray for peace in this troubled area of the world so that the gospel will not be hindered (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The Presidential Challenge

HARARE, ZIMBABWE - On Sunday, February 21st, teen disciples held a church service and dinner with President Robert Mugabe as he celebrated his 75th birthday. The 252 people in attendance included the President, his aides, and residents from two children’s homes. The President far exceeded the 30 minutes he allotted for the visit, staying for two and a half hours. After hearing a powerful sermon by Rodwell Mugochi, the President addressed the crowd, commending the teens for their “spiritual backbone” and challenging the church to continue growing and reaching out to more young people.

Tragedy in Littleton, Colorado

By John Lusk, Evangelist, Denver International Church of Christ

The eyes of the world have been fixed on Columbine High School in the aftermath of the worst school shooting in US history, claiming 15 lives. Thankfully, our two teen disciples at that school escaped without injury. To God’s glory, even in the midst of such a horrific week, the Denver Church experienced our greatest week of growth in recent years. Disciples here are even more committed to saving our city – especially our teens, starting with a teen Bible Study at Chatfield High School, where Columbine students were temporarily transferred. We donated $4,000 to the families of the victims of the tragedy. Contributions may be sent c/o The Denver Church of Christ at 6925 Carr Street, Arvada, CO 80004.

Please pray as we share the comfort of God with our hurting city.

(For more details concerning this event, please the visit the ICOC website at www.icoc.org).

SUMMER CAMPS FOR KINGDOM KIDS

Hot News from South America

Imitating our brothers and sisters in the book of Acts and in the African Churches, the disciples in South America held “First Century” services in March and God blessed their faith in tremendous ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DISCIPLES</th>
<th>ATTENDANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>São Paulo, Brazil</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>13,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio de Janeiro, Brazil</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>8,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago, Chile</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>5,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belo Horizonte, Brazil</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>4,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvador, Brazil</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GEORGIA – Atlanta Church

Ages 9-18, Cost $225
One-week sessions: June 13-August 14
Jennifer Rorabaugh (770) 645-9433

TEXAS – Dallas Church

Grades 1st-12th, Cost $150
One-week sessions: May 30-August 7
John Young (972) 395-0082

ILLINOIS – Chicago Church

Grades 5th-12th, Cost $150
One-week sessions: July 4-31
Dwana Hirshman (630) 833-0606

MAINE – Boston Church

Grades 8th-12th, Cost $240-$275
One-week only: August 21-28
Phil Arsenault (978) 988-9147

NEW YORK TEENS – New York Church

Grades 6th-7th, Cost $250
One-week only: August 22-28
Julie Brumley (201) 463-9220

NEW YORK PRETEENS – New York Church

Ages 13-18, Cost $250-$300
One-week only: August 22-28
Daisy Polanco (973) 509-2834

VIRGINIA – Washington DC Church

Grades 8th-12th, Cost $200
One-week sessions: June 7-13
Deb Loban (703) 922-8594

COLORADO – Denver Church

Ages 10 years-12th grade, Cost $220
One-week only: August 1-6
Julie Brumley (303) 463-9220

Hagerstown, Indiana: “Tears filled my eyes as I read about the great things that have happened in the Kingdom since I left in 1988. I have to come back.”

Seoul, South Korea: “I’m so excited to read about disciples all over the world. I am convinced our lifestyle and mindset are the same in Christ.”

Monterrey, Mexico: “Thanks to the LA Church for keeping us informed about the FOX Files segment.”

Singapore: “I am a sister in the Singapore Church. I especially appreciate the ‘Directory’ on the website because it helps me find the church when I travel around the world.”

Bogota, Colombia: “Could you please give me an e-mail address of a disciple in Los Angeles so I can introduce my friend to the church?”

Novosibirsk, Siberia: “Hello, we are your brother and sister from Novosibirsk! We are so glad to see this site.”