UPC . . . a Code or a Church?

. . . And the Rest is History!

"And Elijah . . . repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down . . . And . . . he built an altar in the name of the LORD . . . Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice . . . And when all the people saw it, they said . . . the LORD, he is the God" (I Kings 18:30–39).

I grew up with a traditional Baptist background because my father was a Baptist pastor. I was not familiar with other denominations until high school, when I heard about the UPC from my older sister *Deborah Stephens (Cleary)*. She introduced us to Pentecost (Apostolic Faith). I had always thought UPC was just a code. Of course, in the marketplace, the Universal Product Code (UPC) is a barcode symbol that is widely used for tracking trade items in stores. I was glad to later discover another connotation of UPC—as a church. Indeed, we are *"bought with a price,"* and I am glad God can keep track of His children in churches (I Corinthians 6:20).

Retrospectively, a college classmate in the Chemical Engineering department invited Deborah to church. And the very first time she attended a UPC Church, she accepted the invitation to come forward and pray after the preaching. It was at "the altar" where she repented of her sins and was filled with the Holy Ghost. She was later baptized in the name of Jesus. She then brought the Good News to the rest of the family and said, "I will find a local UPC church for all of you to visit." So, some of the family, including myself, did visit . . . and the rest is history! We were filled with the Holy Ghost and baptized in the name of Jesus!

Many individuals in the Bible built altars to the Lord. Today, the Lord still expects us to build a spiritual altar unto Him. I believe that many at Azusa Street made themselves a living sacrifice upon the altar, believing for the presence of God and for the fire of God to fall. Without a sacrifice on the altar there will be no fire! *The fire of God never falls on empty altars!*

Many of your answers to life's problems can be found at an altar of prayer. So, remember, "*Don't leave your problems at the door, bring them to the altar."* I'm so glad my sister found the altar. I'm so glad we found the altar. And I'm so glad, as a result, we can help others find their altar, so they too may discover that UPC is not just a barcode, but a church!

Flo Shaw
Director
World Network of Prayer