

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
August 4, 2006 – Cincinnati, OH

Chairman Robert Dick opened the first meeting of the Council of Elders for the 2006-2007 fiscal year today shortly before 1 p.m. All Council members were present, except Joel Meeker who is traveling on Church business. There was a full gallery of guests, including several Ambassador Bible Center students and other visitors.

Mr. Dick welcomed Bill Eddington and Richard Pinelli as the new members of the Council and then provided an overview of today's meeting.

It is the custom of the Council to review the Council of Elders Code of Ethics at the first meeting of each fiscal year. Richard Thompson, acting chairman of the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee, read the code to the Council.

Mr. Dick then gained the Council's approval of the minutes of the meetings held May 10 to 12 and a teleconference on June 20. By resolution the Council approved the minutes of an Executive Committee teleconference that was also held on June 20. The resolution was approved 10-0, with Bill Eddington abstaining.

After these preliminary "housekeeping" business items, the rest of the open session consisted of a report given by Clyde Kilough, summarizing the efforts of the home office administrative staff for fiscal year 2005-2006, which ended on June 30, 2006.

President's Unified Report

Mr. Kilough opened his year-end report by commenting that overall it was a very successful year. Even though some adjustments were necessary due to new personnel, all the major goals established for 2005-2006 were accomplished. He described the overall condition of the Church as stable and settled, and he said that membership is continuing to grow at a modest rate.

Commenting first on Ministerial Services, Mr. Kilough reported that this was a year of major developments and manpower changes—Richard Pinelli took on the new position of ministerial development coordinator and Jim Franks replaced him as operation manager. Dave Johnson joined the faculty of the Ambassador Bible Center in addition to duties in Ministerial Services and David Register stepped into the new responsibility of educational programs director. Mr. Kilough reported that there had been a smooth transition into the new positions.

The Ambassador Bible Center is under the direction of Ministerial Services, as part of the education program, and it will complete this year's academic program with graduation on Aug. 13. The class of 53 is the largest ever and will bring the total number

of graduates to 374. In a report to Mr. Kilough, ABC faculty members Gary Antion, Ralph Levy, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Register all offered positive comments about this year's class in terms of their attentiveness, energy, enthusiasm, desire to learn and leadership.

Mr. Kilough commented that 45 students have already been accepted for the 2007 session. More applications are being processed and additional ones are expected to come in. He remarked that the sustained number of applications, as the program enters its eighth year in 2007, is very encouraging, since, when ABC was begun, it wasn't clear how many potential students would be interested in attending ABC.

After this year's graduation, ABC Continuing Education seminars will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Morton, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; and Calgary, Alberta.

A six-man decision-making team was developed this year, which has responsibility for ABC leadership. The team, which meets monthly, consists of Mr. Kilough, Mr. Franks, Mr. Register, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Antion and Dr. Levy. Lyle Welty, pastor of the Cincinnati East congregation where ABC students attend, also participates in the meetings.

A meeting is planned in September for a comprehensive review of the program—to analyze what has been successful, what has been learned and brainstorm about the future of ABC.

Moving on to another subject, Mr. Kilough emphasized the importance of the ministerial development and education programs. He pointed out that the Council will discuss the education program proposal later in these meetings. Today Mr. Kilough emphasized the efforts being made in the area of ministerial development.

He commented that Church leadership recognizes the value of having a stable and experienced ministry and is acutely aware of the need for ministerial development to meet future needs. Mr. Pinelli has been given the responsibility to focus solely on that need. Mr. Pinelli had four regional ministerial conferences in the United States and two Canadian conferences during the 2005-2006 fiscal year. He also coordinated a conference in the Philippines in July 2006 and will also conduct conferences this fiscal year in the United Kingdom and South America, as well as five more regional conferences in the United States. The conferences focus on helping pastors identify and develop leaders in their local congregations, which hopefully will lead to the hiring of more men for the full-time ministry. The international conferences are intended to assist international areas in their manpower development. We hope that these will bear fruit since so many international areas in particular are struggling with ministerial manpower concerns.

Mr. Kilough also commented on other aspects of ministerial development under Mr. Pinelli's direction. In the past four years, some 70 elders and potential leaders have completed a Leadership Workshop (also known in the past as the Ministerial Candidate

Program). This year the annual workshop, which takes place during the Labor Day weekend, will add greater emphasis on speaking skills, working with different personality types, working with the youth and developing more leaders in local congregations.

Mr. Kilough also described a training program provided for men newly hired into the full-time ministry. It begins with a two-day orientation and then will be followed up with a series of three two-week sessions of classes over a period of six months, designed to further train the men to pastor in all areas of the ministry (church organization, visiting, counseling, speaking, etc.).

In addition, Roy Holladay has been asked to compile leadership training programs that have been developed by individual pastors. He will then turn that information over to Mr. Register who will use the information to help develop a comprehensive leadership program to be used in local congregations.

Mr. Kilough emphasized that there is a real need for ministerial manpower in the United States and especially in international areas. There are potential leaders in the Church in both the short term and long term. He pointed out that Jesus Christ will call those into the ministry as He sees fit. But it is our responsibility to do our part, too, in preparing for and preparing ministerial candidates. He commented on the care that is taken in the hiring process, which includes a comprehensive personal interview of the candidate and his wife by two representatives from Ministerial Services. He emphasized the importance of having a thorough working knowledge of the candidate, and being certain to answer any of his questions, too. Mr. Kilough gave the Council a copy of the questions and topics included in the interview and commented that the process has worked well.

In a written report sent to the Council last week, Mr. Franks cited some basic statistics. U.S. church attendance as of July 1, 2006, was 15,800, compared to 15,500 on Oct. 31, 2005. Attendance on Pentecost of this year showed a modest gain of 2 to 3 percent. Through May 2006 there were 103 baptisms in the United States, compared to 109 the previous year. There are currently 216 congregations in the United States served by 87 pastors, two associate pastors and one pastor assigned solely to overseas work.

Mr. Kilough then moved on to report on the 2005-2006 efforts in the area of Media and Communications Services, under the direction of operation manager Peter Eddington.

He pointed out the steady growth in the number of coworkers (3,251, a 14.55 percent increase) and donors (7,905, an 18.5 percent increase) during the fiscal year.

Mr. Kilough commented that the changing world has created challenges for the Church and at the same time has led to opportunities and positive results.

For example, even though the circulation of *United News* has decreased slightly (due to a renewal program), the cost of producing and delivering it last year rose some 34 percent, due primarily to increased postage and shipping costs.

At the same time, events and trends have stirred greater interest in some of our booklets. There was a spike in activity on our Web site during the Easter season and again at the end of June when *The Da Vinci Code* movie was released, as people were searching the Internet using keywords such as “Jesus Christ,” bringing them to one of our Web sites. Also, a huge spike occurred in mid- to late-July when war erupted in the Middle East. In the last week of July there were more than 5,000 requests for *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Ongoing interest in prophecy, issues about Jesus Christ and questions about what happens after death also resulted in a shift in the 12 most-requested booklets. *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* became the fourth-most-requested booklet while *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* moved to number six. *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* advanced to number 10. *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* is now the 11th-most-requested booklet.

The newly formed media steering group (which consists of Mr. Kilough, Mr. Dick, Victor Kubik, Larry Salyer, Peter Eddington, Joel Meeker, Roger Foster and Jason Lovelady) met for three days in June in Indianapolis, Indiana. The group started its work by listing a series of questions (some very basic, others philosophical) that need to be answered to establish a foundation of fundamental principles for our media efforts. The group formed about 40 specific questions, which were then divided into five general categories relating to our mission, the message itself, relating to our audience, delivering our message and caring for those who respond.

Since the meeting in Indianapolis, the group has had four two-hour teleconferences and will also conduct a series of face-to-face meetings beginning later this month. The value of the discussions to date has been in verifying the value of the Church’s Media Philosophy Statement and helping to identify the Church’s core issue of our media efforts. In the next meeting this committee plans to complete the answering of the above questions and move into a discussion of the *Beyond Today* program in particular and the effective use of Internet video in general as tools to preach the gospel effectively. Over time each area of media will be discussed, each generating its own list of questions, issues and decisions.

Statistical highlights from Mr. Eddington’s report on efforts in the Media and Communications Services area during the 2005-2006 fiscal year:

- Answered 16,946 questions left on the Church’s Web sites.
- Total *Good News* magazines printed—3,001,616 (21.9 percent increase over last year).
- Visitors to the *Good News* Web site (www.gnmagazine.org)—1,154,806 (207 percent increase).

- Literature requests generated by Yahoo Internet advertisements—48,144 (8.7 percent increase).
- Pieces of literature mailed from the home office mail center—494,452 (0.7 percent increase (does not include the millions of pieces mailed directly by printing companies).
- Each *Bible Study Course* lesson was reprinted, for a total of 135,000 copies (21 percent increase). A total of 1.18 million total copies of all lessons have been printed so far. As of June 30, 2006, there were 6,743 people enrolled. An interesting statistic is that 11 percent of *Bible Study Course* graduates are coworkers or donors and 95 percent have requested other literature beyond the *Good News* and the study course. In contrast, only 2.8 percent of our entire subscriber base are coworkers or donors, indicating that our study course readers are four times more likely to make a donation.
- The sermon tape program has transitioned to MP3 CDs and DVDs. Duplication costs are 1/8th of audiotapes and mailing costs are greatly reduced.

Mr. Kilough then turned his attention to the financial report, prepared by Tom Kirkpatrick.

At the start of calendar year 2006, income started to increase steadily. The fiscal year ended on June 30 with income settling at 5 percent over what had been projected in the budget. Income in the first five weeks of the current fiscal year (July 2006) is 17 percent above the same period last year. As a result of the strong income levels for 2005-2006 and the first month of this fiscal year, the Church has already met the reserve amount budgeted for 2006-2007, and has an income surplus on-hand. Mr. Kilough commented that extra income is just as much a test of stewardship as low income. He said it is important that we handle the money appropriately, but it's good to have the option to entertain some ideas for use of the money in doing the Church's work.

In his concluding comments, Mr. Kilough commented on how challenging and stimulating it has been to serve as president. He observed that he came into the position at the best possible time in the short history of the Church. He said that he is grateful that he inherited a solid team and that he has also added others to it who are working together effectively. He commented that while we are all used to "wearing several hats," one of the administrative changes has been to ask a couple of men (Richard Pinelli and Dave Register) to focus solely on one major responsibility to fulfill needs in the Church.

He summarized his response to the Council's statement that the president should be a spokesman for the Church: in the past year videos of four of his sermons have been sent to be played in all the congregations; he has visited 28 congregations giving sermons focusing on vision, commitment and sacrifice; he also visited two summer camps and three special activity weekends in local areas. In addition, he has written a letter each month to those on the *Good News* e-mail subscriber list.

Mr. Kilough reviewed the upcoming schedule for himself and the home office staff, which includes:

- A ministerial conference and National Council meeting in South Africa from Aug. 22 to Sept. 1.
- Leadership Workshop in Cincinnati over the Labor Day weekend.
- Regional manpower development conferences in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; St. Louis, Missouri; Cincinnati; Portland, Oregon; and Los Angeles, California.
- Conference with senior pastors working in Africa on Nov. 1 and 2.
- Mr. Franks' visit to Kenya in September.
- ABC assessment meeting on Sept. 26.
- Regional pastors conference.
- Camp directors conference.

Mr. Kilough summarized that his focus for the upcoming year will be to:

- Continue to stay in touch with members and ministers as much as possible, doing what is possible to keep us collectively focused on our calling, mission, growth, unity and spiritual development.
- Develop an effective education program.
- Develop manpower to meet the future needs of the Church.
- Develop the most-effective media program we can possibly have.

The day concluded with the Council meeting in closed session (Council members only) from 3 to 5 p.m. to finalize the Council's annual performance assessment for the president and secretary.

Don Henson

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