

United Church of God *an International Association*

Robert Dick
Chairman

Clyde Kilough
President

December 3, 2006

Dear Fellow Elders,

Greetings from the soggy Northwest. Western Oregon and Washington have just ended the rainiest period in their recorded history, and we are currently drying out with a few days of sunshine. All the pastors in the Northwest are coming into Portland today for a pastors' conference on Monday and Tuesday, and the following day Clyde Kilough, Jim Franks, Richard Pinelli and I leave Portland for Cincinnati and the December Council of Elders meeting. It is a busy time.

The official start of the December Council of Elders meetings is Friday afternoon, and I wanted to get the agenda to you by Monday so you can see what is scheduled. It is a long dry spell between the August and December meetings—the longest period between meetings in our annual cycle, and it is easy to forget where the Council is in its business.

In terms of the agenda, let me highlight three portions of it. I hope by fleshing out some of the titles it will give you a better understanding of what we are addressing.

At the beginning of this fiscal year, Tom Kirkpatrick in his usual conservative manner told the Council it was too early to tell, but if finances continued to track in the fashion they had been, we stood to break out of a 2 to 4 percent annual growth rate that had been the norm for United. I do not wish to preempt comments from the president that should appear in the Friday Council report, but finances have been good, and we now have three items of business that all address how to properly use excess above budget. It is a good place to be and a new experience for the Council. Obviously there are more ways to spend money than there is money, but that is the nature of budgetary planning.

Another area that is of major significance to the members of the General Conference of Elders is a preliminary discussion on the nature of GCE annual meetings. Jim Franks brought up one segment of a much bigger issue by asking if we could address the issue of equity in financially subsidizing attendance at the annual GCE meeting. The discussion led to the question of whether this is the time to address every aspect of GCE meetings.

Over the last decade we have stabilized to the point where it may be time to look at the whole issue of GCE meetings—manner of meetings, frequency, financing and Bylaws that govern all these issues. In the December meeting we want to explore whether we wish to make a comprehensive study. If so, what all would be involved? If there is agreement to go forward, then we face the job of assigning a task force to address the issue and giving them a deadline for bringing back their findings.

The third area of focus will be addressed on Tuesday morning. Let me come at this one with a running start. You are all aware that the Council has been progressively relinquishing administrative roles to the home office and staff. This has been a focus of the Council since the spring of 2005. I am personally pleased with the progress the Council has made in this effort, but it is a work in progress.

It is understood that there is a natural evolution that takes place in the life of a new organization with a new board of directors. In the August 7, 2002, Council report that progression was described in the context of the United Church of God. Here is an excerpt:

Our experience has not been unique. Typically, when a non-profit structure of any kind (including a church) is formed, the founding Board of Directors is all there is – there is no administration. As a result the organization's Board (which for the United Church of God is the Council of Elders) goes through a natural process of evolution.

Stage One: There is only the Board, the administration has not yet been selected and hired. The Board handles all administrative matters.

Stage Two: The Board works in concert with a small staff and finds itself both governing and managing. In this stage, according to the experience of many non-profits, "the Board tends to take direct control of functions when it feels they are not going as they should."

Stage Three: The final level of evolution is best described as an institutional Board. By this point, most policies of the organization are written and in place, and an adequate administrative staff is in place to care for the operation of the organization. At this point the Board has matured.

In this documented, natural evolution of Boards, it is felt that we are probably in the last vestiges of Stage Two moving toward Stage Three, the institutional Board. (Emphasis mine.)

This was August of 2002. In the four years that have passed since then I believe we have become a full stage three board. Our home office is staffed, policies are written and the Council can focus its attention on governance, organizational planning and assessment.

In August the Committee Review Task Force was assigned the task of bringing forward recommendations on how our committees can work more effectively. In reality we are looking at the next natural step in our growth—moving from committees that served the needs of a stage two board to the committees needed by a stage three board. All of this simply moves us along the road of doing the work of God more effectively.

While these are the visible tasks on the table in December, none of the ongoing tasks have changed or gone away. Our focus is still on bearing fruit and developing systems for measuring that fruit. We still see the need for the Council to be in the vanguard of the strategic thinking necessary to steer the efforts of the United Church of God.

I hope the summary has been a help. Please remember us in your prayers. Ask God to give us a safe journey and the guidance of His Spirit in the December meetings.

On behalf of the Council of Elders,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Dick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Dick