

United Church of God, *an International Association*
CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY
Council of Elders May 8-10, 2007, Meetings—Cincinnati, Ohio

With the May Council meetings we are beginning a new supplement to the daily Council reports. Tuesday the question of how to improve communications with the GCE came up, and one major issue was front and center. The GCE needs to know why. What is the thinking behind Council decisions? The Council report isn't designed to interpret Council decisions; it's a reporting tool, and it has been a good one. Many GCE members want more—they want to know why. To answer that need we are adding a Chairman's Commentary to the Council report. With it we will fill in the "whys"—the reasons behind the decisions.

Welcome to volume one.

Two Home Office Relocation Resolutions

If you have read the Council report for May 8, you know that the first two resolutions on Tuesday were about the relocation of the home office. It is easy for this action to appear insensitive. That was not the intent behind either. To begin with, we had an obligation to the land owner to consider.

Monday Clyde Kilough, Tom Kirkpatrick and Jason Lovelady came to my room at the Holiday Inn to discuss, Where to from here? These things needed to be clarified before the beginning of Council business on Tuesday morning. We have a deposit on a property in Denton, Texas, and the owner knew the GCE vote was taking place Sunday. With the publishing of the ballot we obviously needed to contact the owner and make good our intent to move forward.

The original resolution contained vague language, and as we talked it became obvious that we needed to craft another resolution to spell out the intent of the earlier one. The original resolution contained this wording:

“It is further resolved, that, contingent upon the approval of a home office relocation by the General Conference of Elders and, *upon satisfaction of the Council,* approval will be granted by the Council of Elders to purchase...”

What do you mean, “upon the satisfaction of the Council”? These men asked that we clearly spell out what this phrase means in another resolution. If you will look at the first resolution passed on Tuesday you will see that it spells out the due diligence steps that must be taken before we purchase the land. Until the Council is “satisfied” with the results of these three steps, no purchase will take place. In fact, if any of these three do not meet Council satisfaction, there will be no purchase. On the other side of the coin, if these three are satisfied, the intent is to make the purchase.

We were also well aware that the second resolution we crafted on Tuesday could give a wrong impression. We both heard and understood the comment made at Sunday evening's Council Q&A that expressed the sensitivity to the appearance of applying pressure to members to contribute to a building fund for the relocation.

We do face a problem, however, in that there were already people asking if, when and how they could contribute. Without a restricted fund, however, there is no place to send it, and any contributions have to be returned. This resolution to establish a restricted fund was necessary for accounting purposes to give a place for people to send contributions. We are not currently planning any formal announcement to the membership until after the August COE meeting. The timetable for the steps in due diligence are scheduled to end about Sept. 1. Until all of these steps are satisfied, we are not ready to actually purchase the property.

Full Day Executive Session

If you are a reader of the Council reports, you are aware that all day Wednesday was executive session. We can't avoid what we can't avoid, but we will try to do a better job of explaining why.

Tuesday we responded to a personal request by an elder to address the Council of Elders. We allowed an hour and a half in executive session for him to put forward his petition.

In Wednesday's executive session we took even more time to deliberate his request among ourselves.

Each time I send out an agenda it contains time set aside to consider ordinations and such. These are always handled in executive session. Ordinations are usually straightforward, but credentialing elders after 12 years as a Church can take more time to consider. This time we also addressed a request for removal of credentials and usually the Council will take considerable time to look at the reasons before removing an elder's credentials. Obviously this all gets lumped under the broad term *executive session*, but it isn't always a quick matter to deal with credentialings and removals.

This session we were faced with a fast-track request to approve a new hymnal in the hopes of being able to get it in print before the Feast of Tabernacles. Knowing that this was on the agenda, we had more than one elder who asked us to consider his concerns about additional hymns confidentially. Out of respect for their requests, we also deliberated on these issues in executive session.

Many of you are aware that the Elder's Forum moderator tendered his resignation before the GCE meeting unless asked to continue in that role by the Council of Elders. This was another closed discussion. While the discussion was in closed session, the

results can be communicated openly—the Council asked him to stay on, and he has responded to us that he will.

By now I think you can appreciate the hours and hours needed in this case to respond to individual requests and personal issues.

We also spent some of the time in frank discussion of the aftermath of the home office relocation vote. At times executive session time is used simply to give Council members the ability to think out loud when their thoughts are not fully formed without the worry that what they say will go on the record. While this is the most arbitrary use of executive session time, it is done out of a recognition that if the same discussion took place in open session, men would simply choose not to speak rather than to speak extemporaneously. You all know what it is like to think out loud as you try to form your thoughts and hope the friends listening will respect that your speaking is only a way of forming your own thoughts. We did some of this, too, and the commentary you are reading is a product of that free-form brainstorming.

It was good to find a way to address one of our frustrations. We appreciate the Council reports, but it has bothered us for years that without commentary you are left to assume why we do what we do. That needed to be corrected. As I said at the beginning, what the Council reports can't really tell you is the "why" behind many of our discussions.

We hope you will find the explanations in the Chairman's Commentary helpful and that they may provide a greater insight into the thinking behind our actions.

Bob Dick
Chairman

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