

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
May 10, 2007–Cincinnati, Ohio

Robert Dick opened the meeting at 9 a.m. in the conference room at the home office building. He outlined the day's agenda items and then introduced David Register, chairman of the General Conference of Elders meeting planning task force, for a debriefing on the recently completed annual meeting of the GCE.

GCE Meeting Update and Plans

Mr. Register opened by thanking the Council for its support of the planning task force and requested input to help plan next year's conference. Total attendance in Cincinnati was virtually the same this year compared to last year (213 in 2007 compared to 212 in 2006). Attendance at the workshops on Monday, May 7, was somewhat lower.

Much of the discussion centered on a survey that is being developed to request input and feedback from elders and wives who attended. The Council considered each question and offered a few suggested changes and editorial comments. The online survey, which will allow for anonymous responses, will consist of approximately 20 questions, and will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this year's conference and help in planning future meetings of the GCE.

Charles Melear, the Church's conference planner, provided the Council with some options for the location of the 2008 General Conference of Elders. The meeting is scheduled for May 17-19, 2008. The Holiday Inn Eastgate, which has been used for the last several GCE meetings, is not available at that time. The Council directed Mr. Melear to continue searching for possible venues in or near Cincinnati.

Amendment Schedule for 2008

David Johnson, Church secretary, provided the Council with a schedule for the processing of proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws that will be balloted on at the 2008 GCE meeting. As required, Mr. Johnson will send the schedule to the members of the General Conference within 10 days of the conclusion of the 2007 GCE. The resolution adopting the schedule was unanimously approved by the Council.

Mr. Johnson also took time to personally thank outgoing secretary, Gerald Seelig, for his outstanding support to Mr. Johnson during his transition into that responsibility.

Recognition of Departing Council Members

Due to scheduling considerations, time was taken early in the day to recognize and thank departing Council members Les McCullough and Leon Walker.

Mr. Dick noted that Mr. McCullough, as a “senior statesman,” has provided years of service to the Council and Church. He described Mr. McCullough as a “patriarch” among us, and thanked him for the wisdom and perspective he added to the Council.

Mr. Dick also described Leon Walker as a “senior statesman” of the Church. As a member, and in recent years chairman, of the Council’s Doctrine Committee, Mr. Dick called Mr. Walker’s efforts “invaluable,” as he worked for over a decade in helping establish a firm doctrinal foundation for the Church.

Recognizing the service of their wives as well, Mr. Dick presented Mr. and Mrs. McCullough and Mr. and Mrs. Walker with gifts as a token of the Council’s appreciation for their many years of service.

Report from the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee

Joel Meeker, chairman of the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee, reported on the progress toward the restructuring of that committee. Mr. Meeker presented the Council with a proposal to divide the current committee into two committees, “Ethics” and “Roles and Rules,” providing a list of the responsibilities that would fall to each. The Council voted unanimously in favor of a resolution to create the two new committees.

Mr. Meeker also presented a list of the current members of the Member Appeal Committee and the Expelled Elder Appeal Committee. Both of these committees are made up of members of the GCE. There are different ways of selecting the committee members and varying lengths of service on each committee. Mr. Dick directed Mr. Meeker to give the Council a recommendation on streamlining and simplifying the process of selecting elders to serve on those committees at the August meeting.

Mr. Meeker requested input from the Council on the forms they use in the process of providing the performance assessment of the president, treasurer and secretary. The current forms will be used this year and edits made for future years.

Selections for New Hymnal

Steve Myers, chairman of the hymnal project, had asked the Council to make a determination about the inclusion of two particular hymns in the new hymnal—“America the Beautiful” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Council members considered the comments from multiple international areas, noting that we are an international church, while “America the Beautiful” is an American patriotic song. In many areas the words have to be changed to make it acceptable, or it is simply considered unacceptable to sing. In considering the international nature of the Church, the Council agreed to leave it out of the new hymnal.

The Council was in agreement that the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” could be included, though under its earlier title, “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory.” While

commonly associated with the U.S. Civil War, in truth, when written, the hymn had nothing to do with that war. The Council agreed that the lyrics are positive, meaningful and inspiring, and the hymn would be appropriate for the new hymnal.

Chairman's Commentary

Mr. Dick showed the Council a sample of a report that he will begin providing to the elders. This Chairman's Commentary will provide background information as to the "whys" and reasons behind certain Council decisions and executive session discussions. (Mr. Dick sent the first commentary to the GCE on May 11.)

Improving Effectiveness of Elders Forum

Mr. Kilough commented that a number of suggestions have recently come forward for improving the effectiveness of the Elders Forum. He stated that the forum is a powerful tool that can be a very helpful and meaningful resource to the ministry. However, there have been misuses of and misunderstanding about the forum in recent months. He concluded that since the Council ultimately has responsibility for the forum, that they should take the necessary steps to improve it. He suggested the formation of a GCE-based task force, under the direction of the Council, to work on the issues and bring forward suggestions to the Council.

Discussion led to the conclusion that the entire GCE should be surveyed, both forum users and nonusers, to provide a full range of input and suggestions.

Mr. Dick asked Victor Kubik to chair an ad hoc Council committee to address the Elders Forum issues. Mr. Kubik requested that Richard Thompson, Larry Salyer and Bill Eddington join him on the committee. The Council committee will appoint and work with a GCE advisory committee (to be approved by the Council), to create a questionnaire to survey the members of the GCE. >From this survey's results, these two bodies will be asked to make recommendations to the Council regarding the Elders Forum. It is hoped the committee will be able to provide the Council with a report and suggested actions by the August meetings.

The Council unanimously passed a resolution forming the ad hoc committee.

Selection of Council Chairman

The last item of business at this meeting was the bylaw-mandated election of a chairman. Since Mr. Dick has served for two years as chairman, it is required that the Council ballot to either select a new chairman or renew the current chairman's term. On its first ballot, Mr. Dick was chosen by the Council to continue as chairman.

The Council meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Don Henson

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