

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
Aug. 5, 2007–Cincinnati, Ohio

Robert Dick called the Council of Elders to order Sunday shortly after 9 a.m., opening business for the first meetings of the 2007-2008 fiscal year. All 12 members of the Council were present, including two who were elected at the annual General Conference of Elders in May, Bob Berendt and Roy Holladay. Leon Walker also rejoined the Council, replacing Joel Meeker, who recently resigned from the Council.

After the opening prayer, Mr. Dick commented that this meeting is the first opportunity for the Council to review the Church's efforts in the 2006-2007 fiscal year, which was completed on June 30, and to look ahead to 2007-2008. He stated that one important item on the agenda is discussion of efforts toward relocating the home office, as well as continued development of the Council's strategic planning process in general.

As is traditional at the beginning of the first meeting of each fiscal year, Richard Thompson read the Council of Elders Code of Ethics, a reminder of the responsibilities and standards of each Council member.

The official minutes for the meetings on May 8-10, 2007, were approved as submitted.

After a brief overview of the day's agenda, Mr. Dick introduced Clyde Kilough for his unified report on home office activities since the last Council meetings.

President's Unified Report

Mr. Kilough first reported on activity under the direction of Ministerial Services based on a report submitted by operation manager Jim Franks, and then addressed developments in Media and Communications Services, under the direction of operation manager Larry Salyer.

Ministerial Services

A new series of regional elders conferences has begun. The first was held in July in the Northeast Region. Four more will be held in this fiscal year: the Southeast Region (August 2007), Northwest Region (November 2007), the South Central Region (January 2008) and the Southwest Region (March 2008). The other four regions will have conferences in the summer and fall of 2008.

Mr. Kilough showed the Council a sample of a notebook that details teachings on the 20 fundamental doctrines of the Church, which is being distributed at the regional conferences. He emphasized the importance of pastors and elders (in international areas as well as the United States) being firmly grounded in doctrinal understanding.

Mr. Kilough gave an overview of the training programs that have been developed and implemented.

- The basic leadership training program has been offered at several international locations. It includes a discussion of the structure and government of United and basic issues of character and attitude.
- Advanced leadership training is held in Cincinnati during the Labor Day weekend and offers 26 to 28 hours of instruction. The sixth session will be held this September, bringing the total number of couples who have participated to 96. To date, 16 men who attended this program have been hired by the Church, and 13 who attended have been later ordained elders.
- The Pastoral Training Program, which was introduced in January 2007, was highly successful and will be continued in this fiscal year. It consists of a series of three two-week training sessions designed to help prepare newly hired pastors for their responsibilities. The program will take place in January, March and May of 2008. From 10 to 12 couples will be invited to participate, including newly hired pastors and current pastors with the least seniority in the full-time ministry.

Figures from Church Pastor's Monthly Reports indicate that average weekly U.S. attendance in March 2007 was 11,713. Average weekly high attendance was 13,279. Attendance was over 13,000 for three of the first six months of 2007. There have been 105 baptisms so far this year (compared to a total of 171 for the entire year of 2005 and 181 in 2006). United currently supports 216 congregations with 94 full-time pastors. Twenty-nine of the congregations have an average attendance each Sabbath of over 100, and 42 average under 20.

The Ambassador Bible Center class of 2007 will graduate on Aug. 12. For 2008, 28 students have been accepted to date, with 11 applications still in process. ABC Continuing Education seminars have been scheduled for 2008 in Cincinnati (Aug. 20-24); Houston, Texas (Aug. 25-26); St. Louis, Missouri (Oct. 20-21); Chicago, Illinois (Oct. 27-28); Allentown, Pennsylvania (Nov. 17-18); Spokane, Washington (Nov. 17-18); Oakland, California (Dec. 1-2); Portland, Oregon (Dec. 23-25); and Louisville, Kentucky (Dec. 24-25).

In June, the Education Advisory Task Force (EATF) met in Phoenix, Arizona, to further its work. They met with John Cafourek to discuss focused education programs and their desired outcomes and with Larry Greider to discuss applying the outcomes model to our youth camp programs. A subcommittee of the EATF is the Women's Education Task Force. Their major work since their inaugural meeting in late April has been to develop two surveys, which are near completion. The first will be for pastors, to try to assess all of the women's activities and programs that have been instituted in various congregations and regions. The aim is to compile a "best practices" clearinghouse for good ideas of programs specific to women's education. The second survey, which will be administered after the results of the pastors' survey are compiled, is for the women in the Church to ascertain their needs.

Plans have been established for continuing the Education Travel Program. Results of a survey after the Egypt trip this spring indicate it was an overwhelming success and participants strongly encouraged further development of the program. As a result, an eight-day trip to Greece is planned next spring beginning during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The tour will follow the travels of Paul in that region. Spring and Fall Feast trips are also planned in 2009 (to Israel and Greece respectively), 2010 (Turkey and Jordan), 2011 (Egypt and Turkey), 2012 (Greece and Israel), 2013 (Turkey and Jordan) and 2014 (Israel).

Mr. Franks and Dave Baker (senior pastor, Asia) recently completed a trip to India and the Philippines. In India, they visited a group located in the northern state of Mizoram, called the Church of God (Israel), which has expressed interest in becoming part of United. This group first contacted United in 1998 and since then Mr. Baker has visited them on three occasions prior to this trip. Since their inception in the early 1970s, the Church of God (Israel) has come to hold many beliefs in common with United. Since contacting United in 1998 they have been using our literature as the basis for their Sabbath services and teachings. Mr. Franks reported that desire to become part of United seems to be sincere on the part of their elders and the 250 members, made up of three congregations. Mr. Franks and Mr. Baker discussed with church leaders doctrinal differences between the two groups.

Under the direction of Doug Horchak, the United Youth Corps continues to offer programs for young adults to become more involved in serving the Church in international areas. The Youth Corps will help staff youth camps in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, the Philippines, Zambia and Malawi. A five-week program will be offered next summer in Jordan and Israel. Participants will serve at a camp for handicapped children in Jordan, work for three weeks at an archaeological dig in Israel or Jordan and tour the region for one week. A complete history of Youth Corps projects is available at their Web site, www.ucgyouthcorps.org.

Mr. Kilough reviewed some interesting and encouraging Feast of Tabernacles registration statistics. He stated that registration-to-date shows an increase of more than 400 over last year. He also pointed out that 23 percent of those registered are preteens and teenagers, and another 12 percent are between the ages of 20 to 30. That means that approximately 35 percent of those attending the Feast will be 30 years of age and under. He acknowledged that while we are an “aging church,” we also see encouraging numbers of children, teens and young adults. He observed that attendance at United Youth Camps has been consistent, if not increasing every year. He emphasized the importance of training and educating youth and young adults to fully integrate them into the Church.

Media and Communications Services

Mr. Salyer arrived at the home office June 18 and to assume his new role as operation manager for Media and Communications Services. Peter Eddington assumed

the new job title of production manager within the media operation structure and will continue with much of his previous work in technical areas.

The media report for the past fiscal year indicated that, of 30 categories of activity that are tracked, three showed a decrease compared to the previous fiscal year:

- Answers to questions asked on our Web sites (16,251) showed a 4 percent decrease.
- *Vertical Thought* print run of 21,500 is a decrease of 0.8 percent (due to an international renewal effort).
- *Beyond Today* radio responses (1,274) experienced a 19 percent decrease.

Of the other 27 categories that are tracked, all showed an increase. And 19 categories showed an increase greater than 15 percent. For example:

- Magazine and booklet insert card responses (302,071) increased 48 percent.
- Total incoming mail processed (598,716) saw a 24 percent increase.
- The number of coworkers increased to 3,740 (a 15 percent increase).
- The number of donors increased by 21 percent to 9,588.
- *World News and Prophecy* circulation reached 47,833 (a 22 percent increase).
- *Good News* print run showed a 23 percent increase to 506,754.
- Visitors to the Web site gnmagazine.org increased by 65 percent to 1,907,759.
- Visitors to the Web site beyondtoday.tv increased by 122 percent, to 294,791.
- Telephone and Web site responses to the *Beyond Today* television program increased by 263 percent to 10,926.
- Pieces of literature mailed from the home office mail center (does not include the millions of pieces mailed directly from printing and fulfillment companies) grew by 14 percent to 564,316.

United has now printed more than five million booklets. To keep pace with demand during the past year, 695,000 copies of 18 titles were reprinted (a 4 percent increase). The top titles printed to date include *What Happens After Death?* (255,000 copies), *What Is Your Destiny?* (255,000), *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* (231,000), *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* (220,000), *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (200,000) and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* (200,000).

During the year 27,291,000 print advertising pieces were distributed throughout the United States—a 400 percent increase over last year. This includes 10 million pieces in *Reader's Digest*, which generated a .31 percent response rate, equating to more than 30,000 new *Good News* subscribers. The 2 million advertising pieces in the April *American Baby* resulted in 10,500 new subscriptions last fiscal year (compared to an anticipated 7,600). Another 2 million advertising pieces appeared in the May *Parents* magazine, which by June 30 had produced 4,643 responses (compared to a projection of 8,400). Even though the response rate from *Parents* was lower than anticipated, the ads appearing in these three magazines had drawn 46,225 returns through June 30, compared to an expectation of 46,000. And responses continue to come in.

Internet advertising at Yahoo and Google also produced new records, with more than 765 million impressions of our ads shown at these popular sites. The ads produced 118,611 responses, by far our best year yet.

Mr. Kilough gave the Council samples of the newly formatted *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* booklet. He explained that the U.S. Postal Service has changed its delivery rates so that they are now based on a combination of weight and dimensions. As a result, it is now much more expensive to mail a magazine-size booklet, while the smaller digest-sized booklets actually cost less than before. For that reason, as each of the larger-sized booklets needs to be reprinted, it will be reformatted to the smaller dimensions.

Home Office Relocation Update

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Kilough reported that due to potential environmental concerns, the pursuit of the property in Denton, Texas, has been dropped. Attention has now been turned to locating another property. Mr. Kilough and Jason Lovelady recently visited the Dallas area, where Mr. Lovelady visited 75 properties across the northern tier of the Dallas area. Mr. Kilough also saw a number of those properties, and they narrowed the field to six to 10 prime prospects. A real estate agent is gathering the details and specifics of each. There will be a report on options in the near future.

Resolutions

Mr. Dick explained the need for the Council to select four elders to serve on the Amendment Committee. By unanimous resolution Rick Avent and Keith Wilson were selected to serve terms that will expire on June 30, 2009. In the same resolution John Miller and Mark Rorem were selected to serve terms that will expire on June 30, 2010. Ed Smith also currently serves as a committee member. Gerhard Marx is the alternate committee member.

Mr. Franks described edits that are necessary to the Member Assistance Manual. The edits were unanimously approved by the Council. Updated pages reflecting the changes will be sent to pastors.

Mr. Franks also led the Council through a discussion of the issue of providing fragrance-free seating when possible in local congregations and at Feast of Tabernacles sites. Announcements are to be made prior to the Feast to inform members what steps can be taken at each individual site. Resolutions to provide fragrance-free seating when possible in local congregations and at the Feast both passed unanimously.

Nomination Process Review

Mr. Dick introduced Bill Eddington who reviewed plans for implementing the nomination procedure approved by ballot of the elders during the GCE in May 2007.

After discussion, the Council asked Mr. Eddington to draft and present for approval a letter to be e-mailed to the elders at the beginning of the nomination process. The letter will explain how the process works and how elders can participate in it. Mr. Eddington will review the letter with the Council before the end of this series of meetings.

Process for Assessment of the President

Mr. Dick led the Council in a discussion of the assessment process for the president. Consideration was given to the format of the assessment form, how the assessment should be communicated to the president and how the president and Council should discuss issues that are most helpful to the president. Mr. Dick tabled the subject for continued discussion in a later meeting.

The Council adjourned for the day at 4 p.m.

-end-

Don Henson

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