

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
Aug. 7, 2007–Cincinnati, Ohio

Robert Dick called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and briefly reviewed the day's agenda. He immediately called on the GCE Planning Task Force chairman, Dave Register, to give a report on results of a survey following the 2007 GCE and plans for the 2008 meeting.

Report From General Conference of Elders Planning Committee

Mr. Register began with an overview of results from the exit survey for the annual GCE meeting held May 4 to 7, 2007. For the first time, elders had the opportunity to fill out an online exit survey. This year 211 elders attended the conference, of which 104 completed the survey. The following summary is based on the completed surveys.

- 87 percent were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the location city.
- 86 percent were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their accommodations.
- 83 percent agreed that the workshops were informative and helpful.

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the nine basic elements of the conference. The choices were “very satisfied,” “satisfied,” “neutral,” “somewhat satisfied” and “not satisfied.” The following summary shows the percentage of respondents who selected a rating of “very satisfied” or “satisfied.”

- Business meeting—77 percent.
- Chairman's reception—57 percent.
- Fellowship opportunities—92 percent.
- International reports—88 percent.
- Keynote address—81 percent.
- Q&A session—39 percent.
- Sabbath service—88 percent.
- Tribute to deceased elders and wives—88 percent.
- Workshops and lectures—63 percent.

The overall satisfaction rating (either “very satisfied” or “satisfied”) by elders was 79 percent (compared to 96 percent in 2006). The overall satisfaction rating by elders' wives was 71 percent (compared to 91 percent in 2006). Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they plan to attend next year's conference. Mr. Register expressed that the survey results are helpful and will be factored into the plans for the 2008 conference. The goal of the task force is to bring the satisfaction level of the lower rated elements into at least the 85 to 95 percent range.

Mr. Register reviewed with the Council the task force's initial recommendations for next year's conference. He indicated that the Holiday Inn Eastgate, which has been

the site of the last several conferences, is not available in 2008. Meeting coordinator Charles Melear reported that venues in other cities in the general area are being investigated (including the greater-Cincinnati area; Columbus, Ohio; and Louisville, Kentucky). Mr. Melear pointed out that hotel conference planners he has contacted have told him that the room rates and meal packages offered at the Holiday Inn are excellent, and it would be difficult for them to match those prices. He is continuing his search for a suitable location.

Mr. Register reviewed suggested themes for the keynote address and workshops. The Council selected the general theme of “Increasing Spiritual Maturity and Wisdom.” Jim Franks commented that the subject would complement the current series of regional conferences for elders. The task force will report back to the Council in the December meetings with more specifics and suggestions toward developing the theme. The Council also gave its approval of the timeline and additional meetings that precede and follow the conference.

Elder’s Forum Advisory Committee

As stated in the meeting reports in May 2007, Mr. Dick directed Victor Kubik to establish an ad hoc Council committee for the purpose of establishing an Elder’s Forum Advisory Committee. Mr. Kubik’s ad hoc committee decided that the advisory committee will consist of 12 elders representing a cross section of the GCE (nonsalaried, salaried, international and U.S.-based) who will make recommendations to the Council regarding the Elder’s Forum.

Today Mr. Kubik presented, and the Council approved, a list of 12 committee members and 10 alternates. Mr. Kubik will contact the elders and ask them to serve as committee members or alternates.

Strategic Plan Development—Part 2

Mr. Dick followed up his presentation on the subject of the development of a strategic plan by providing the Council with two planning methodologies for their consideration. Continuing with the BoardSource presentation material that he used in the meeting on Monday, Aug. 6, Mr. Dick outlined the “contextual” and “revolutionary” approaches to developing a strategic plan. The purpose of this discussion was to familiarize them with the two philosophies to help determine whether and how the Council desires to go about developing a new strategic plan.

Using the contextual method of strategic planning, an organization develops its strategies from its current circumstances, and the focus is placed on fine-tuning the vision of the organization. This approach to strategic planning is best used when:

- An organization is stable and mature.
- Leadership is established and deeply rooted in the organization’s mission.
- The organization wishes to keep its basic structure.

- The organization wishes to enhance its management capacity and to deal with internal strengths and weaknesses to focus on how to improve and enhance the organization.
- The organization does not foresee or wish for changes in its basic strategic approach.

The revolutionary methodology asks an organization to think toward where they would like to be, rather from where they currently are. This approach looks at future possibilities rather than the status quo. This style of strategic planning is best used when an organization:

- Desires or needs a new vision or mission.
- Desires or needs to establish a new image.
- Desires or needs to make major structural changes to its programs—adding new programs or deleting current programs.
- Experiences varying or contradictory opinions for implementing strategies that divide the leadership and staff.

During a brief discussion of the two methodologies, Council members expressed that the contextual method seems to be the better fit for the development of our strategic plan.

Mr. Dick emphasized that the contextual development style accommodates the element of unifying diverse opinions and allows for the introduction of new, creative ideas and strategies.

Larry Salyer commented that it required the revolutionary methodology to establish the United Church of God in the first place. Considering where the Church is now, the contextual methodology seems to be more appropriate at this time.

Leon Walker observed that the contextual approach doesn't mean that all our current strategies are set in concrete. It allows "new thinking" and the introduction of innovative ideas and approaches.

Mr. Dick asked the Council members to carefully consider the discussions so far on strategic planning. He plans in Wednesday's meeting (Aug. 8) to ask each Council member individually to summarize what he thinks we should do in this regard.

After 2 p.m. the Council met in executive session for the balance of the day.

Don Henson

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