Council of Elders Meeting Report - August 11, 2015

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United Church of God, an International Association

Council of Elders Quarterly Meeting Report

Milford, Ohio

Tuesday, August 11, 2015

Chairman Robin Webber called the morning session to order at 9:00 a.m. Eastern, and the meeting was opened with prayer. Eleven Council of Elders (Council) members were present. Scott Ashley was not able to be at the meetings because of previous commitments, but he was able to join over teleconference in the afternoon.

Mr. Webber welcomed everyone and read through the Vision Statement and Mission Statement and read from Philippians 2:1-5 to establish the spiritual tone for the meetings.

The minutes from the previous meetings were asked to be edited by Mark Mickelson. The chairman asked for the Council secretary, Gerald Seelig, and Mr. Mickelson to go over the edits and to present them to the Council later in the week for approval.

There were no changes to the agenda for these meetings, so it was approved.

President’s Report?Victor Kubik [All morning sessions were videoed.]

President Victor Kubik welcomed everyone. Mr. Kubik commented on how God is blessing the Church and how he looks at the blessings even when there are difficulties or challenges at times. God is very much in control, and He opens the doors.

Mr. Kubik went through describing various activities:

- **Ambassador Bible College (ABC):** Classes start August 31 with about 25 students so far. We are closer to getting our SEVIS certification that will help international students acquire the F1 student visa.
- **Ministerial Trainees:** Six men have been hired as ministerial trainees. Also a local elder was hired to be an assistant pastor. These seven will be serving in New England, Eastern Pennsylvania, Alabama, Phoenix, Dallas, East Texas and the home office.
- **Public Appearance Campaign (PAC) will be held in three locations in Texas:** Dallas, San Antonio and Houston. Brochures will be provided for members in those areas to give to friends to invite them to the PAC. Darris McNeely and Victor Kubik will promote the PAC by going down to that area over the Feast of Trumpets.
- **Labor in the Word** is a 48-hour program of instruction to help improve skills in interpretation and
effectively communicating the Bible to the brethren. It will be a requirement for all ministers and should go online next week.

- **Rotary Club:** The home office hosted the Batavia, Ohio, Rotary Club, one of the oldest in the United States, for a breakfast club meeting last week. The guests included community and education leaders including the dean of the University of Cincinnati Clermont. The entire group was given a tour of the home office.

- **Home Office Grounds:** A new playset for children was put up on our grounds. It was largely financed by LifeNets.

**Operation Manager Reports:**

**Ministerial and Member Services (MMS)?Roy Holladay**

Roy Holladay talked about the Church?s responsibility of preaching the gospel to the world and preparing a people. MMS has the responsibility to care for the sheep. MMS cares for the Church as a whole and makes sure the Church is healthy and our ministers are healthy, productive and serving God?s people. As Jesus Christ told Peter, feed My lambs, tend My sheep and feed My sheep. MMS is looking to the future to strengthen and build the Church.

There are two major projects right now:

- Retirement and replacement of church pastors. When UCG started we promised to provide pastors for all congregations, and we are trying to stay with that responsibility. In the next four years we have about 30 men who might retire, so we are working on the process of training and working with younger men to serve in those areas.

- Training, educating, and developing leadership in the Church. This goes from the ministry all the way down to our preteens. We are training new ministers, refreshing the current ones and bringing in new leadership.

MMS has a number of projects that are being worked on and coming up:

- Information Coordinator for Ministerial Education Program?John Elliott came in last week to discuss his duties about this position.
- Labor in the Word Project?Don Ward is coordinating this project. It will be a part of the online training program for the ministry. There will be 24 two-hour classes.
- Area/Regional Conference and Leadership Conference?The conference in Rochester, Minnesota, is coming up next week on Aug. 16-18.
- Pastoral Development Program?This will begin Aug. 24 with 11 couples (six trainee couples and five ministerial couples). It will be held for eight days.
- Labor Day Leadership Conference?The conference will begin on Sept. 4. Presently there will be around 32 attending.
- Holy Day Season?The festivals are approaching and preparation is being made for speaking at the Feast.
- Camp Director Conference?Camp directors will meet Nov. 2-4.
- Area/Regional Conference and Leadership Conference?The conference will be in Portland, Oregon, Nov. 8-10.

Some statistics and general information:

- 369 total elders
Media and Communications Services

Peter Eddington thanked God for His blessings and went through some statistics:

- **United News** circulation is the highest it's been since Aug. 2010.
- Coworker count is now the highest it's ever been (43 percent higher than a year ago).
- Our donor list now includes 8,306 people. That's a 90 percent increase over the same time last year.
- Combined with our coworkers, we now have more of our readers and viewers contributing to the work of the Church than the total number of members in the U.S. and abroad.
- Pieces of mail containing donations for June 2015 were 7,033—the highest since December (8,233)—and the second highest in UCG's history.
- U.S. **Good News** subscribers are the highest they've been since November of 2013. The additional advertising is bringing very good results.
- The Church's **Beyond Today** YouTube channel has had 4.2 million views, has 10,120 subscribers, and hosts 1,425 videos (the most watched program being ?The Next Superpower? with 195,000 views). www.youtube.com/user/BeyondTodayTV [1].

Some of the other items Mr. Eddington discussed were:

- We expect to have **Beyond Today** magazine launched under its new name for the January-February 2016 issue.
- The second test of free-standing newspaper insert ads, totaling 2.3 million pieces, occurred on Aug. 9, 2015 in 69 cities/countries in the East Central and Southeast U.S. regions.
- New streaming technology is being developed for **Beyond Today**, taking advantage of a new method for preaching the gospel message to more of the world.
- **Beyond Today** is broadcast nationwide via the Word Network to 85 million U.S. homes via cable and satellite, plus in dozens of other countries. In particular, we are noticing responses from the U.K. via the Word Network.
- The media department has four out of six positions still open at present. So far they have selected two new hires to help with their ongoing needs: a website content editor and an editorial assistant.
- Attempts to fill one of our most pressing hiring needs, for a Web programmer, has so far not been successful.

Rex Sexton asked if the new streaming technology being developed will tell when a program was played and if we would then have a cost per play for each one to see how productive it will be. Mr. Eddington said that this would be possible through online analytics.

Bill Bradford asked if we will look at new production formats for this kind of media to see if there are other methods for reaching this demographic. Mr. Eddington said that our most successful audience demographic will not necessarily change, but that it has the potential for reaching a much larger audience. Our message involves multiple messages including prophecy, doctrine and Christian living. We try lots of different methods.
Mr. Bradford asked if the media department has a think tank for this new media, so we can keep looking into this. Mr. Eddington explained that there are daily meetings and weekly meetings with 12 to 15 people talking about these things regarding trends and news. They are continually trying to learn and develop in this area for preaching the gospel.

Financial Services?Rick Shabi

With the fiscal year having ended June 30, Rick Shabi distributed reports and discussed some of the trends and financial highlights of the year just ended:

- Throughout each month of the fiscal year, actual income was higher than budgeted income. Overall, income for the year was $2 million more than projected. God is to be thanked and recognized for His provision for the work, as well as the members and coworkers who support the Church through their tithes and offerings.
- Expenses ran along budgeted levels, resulting in a net "ordinary" income of over $1.8 million.
- Cash and total asset balances are significantly higher than at the prior year end.
- Because of higher than budgeted income, the Council was able to approve certain employee considerations and additional print advertising expense during the year.

So far, one month into the fiscal year that began July 1, 2015, income and expense is at budgeted levels.

The annual audit is scheduled for the week of Aug. 17. Audited financial statements will be published in United News later in the year.

Committee Chairman Reports:

Education Committee?Aaron Dean

This committee received the response for the Council recommendations for Ambassador Bible College (ABC) from Frank Dunkle, and they were passed out. The ABC faculty will keep the doctrinal integrity of the program and will look to continually improve the program in ways suggested by the Council. He mentioned all the work that the Schusters have done to help with the SEVIS certification.

Ethics Committee?Mario Seiglie

This committee currently has no tasks before it.

Media and Communications Committee?Rex Sexton

This committee has met twice since June and have discussed the following:

- The history of this committee to help give background and perspective.
- Reviewed the Media Guiding Principles statement.
- Discussion of the meaning and application of the UCG Constitution section 1.2.5, which provides for Council "oversight and guidance" of preaching the gospel efforts.
- Review of the scopes and responsibilities statement.
- Discussion of the "Tone and Voice" chart produced by the media department.
- Highlighting what makes us distinctive on the UCG Web page.
- Emphasizing the need for the committee to communicate early on with and interface with the media department on the development of new ideas or projects.
- Need to maintain open communication and improve the working relationship with the media.
Roles and Rules Committee?Rainer Salomaa

The committee had a videoconference on June 24, with Chris Rowland, also on-line.

At the May 20 meeting, Mr. Webber remanded to the Roles and Rules Committee to work with the administration in clarifying bylaw 8.7.2 in relationship to the HR manual regarding employment. At that meeting, several Council members raised questions about the hiring process and whether the administration was operating outside of our bylaws or procedures when several ministerial trainees were recently hired, specifically regarding whether they needed Council approval.

The committee has examined Bylaw 8.7.2 and the corresponding HR policy 2.1 ?Recruitment and Hiring? and concluded that the administration was operating within our bylaws and procedures.

However, the HR policy states that ?procedures for recruiting and hiring into the field ministry may need to differ slightly from this policy due to the ecclesiastical nature of ministerial job responsibilities.?

The committee was unable to find documentation of how the hiring procedure should differ for the field ministry. When the current policy was written, there was no job position for ?Ministerial Trainee? and most of our hires at that time were not being made to the field ministry.

Therefore, after reviewing the current policy, approved by the Council in 2001, the recommendation of the Roles and Rules Committee is that the HR policy on ?Recruitment and Hiring? be revised and examined in light of current hiring practices and the Council desire to provide additional input for hires to the field ministry. Specific steps for new hires to the field ministry should be developed and incorporated into the policy.

We also recommend that a revised policy should address the statement that approval for the hiring request must be given by the Council of Elders ?and/or? the president?the revised policy should state more clearly when Council approval is required.

It has been left up to the administration to revise HR Policy 2.1 and to bring it for Council review.

Also, the committee recommends that a part of the president?s report include a HR update, much the same as Council receives legal updates.

Thirdly, we have looked at Bylaw 8.7.2, with input from our secretary, lawyer, HR manager and will bring a suggested amendment during this round of Council meetings

Other upcoming committee tasks are:

- Standardizing procedures for selecting the chairman and vice chairman in mid-term.
- Refine the process for selecting the president.

Strategic Planning and Finance Committee?Bill Bradford

Every year this committee verifies the Strategic Plan with an Operation Plan and a Budget. All these are prepared by the administration and then reviewed by the committee. Then they are all presented to the General Conference of Elders (GCE) each year for their approval.

The committee continues to monitor the Strategic Plan and then budgetary matters that are impacted by
There are two major transitions taking place in the work:

- Suppling an effective ministry, who are proficient in their work with a program of retirement and hiring and training and developing leadership.
- Transferring from TV airtime to an Internet platform. This is to give our programming greater exposure for less cost.

Part of the work of this committee is to continually monitor and review the following:

- Internal and external trends that impact the Church's ability to fulfill its mission
- Budget implementation and financial procedures
- The financial condition of the Church—including cash flow summaries and quarterly budget report
- Evaluate trends that would bring opportunity or concern to the organization, and bring these to the attention of the Council for recommendations to management

**Doctrine Committee (DC)?John Elliott**

The scope and responsibilities of this committee states,

> Preservation of the truth is paramount to the mission of the United Church of God, *an International Association* (the Church). It is therefore necessary to ensure that all fundamental beliefs, established doctrines and teachings, and material produced by the Church for internal and external purposes are doctrinally sound.

The scope of this committee's work, as directed by the Council of Elders, extends to all matters relative to the fundamental beliefs, established doctrines and teachings of the Church.

Some of the recent work includes:

- DC is considering the ?Scope and Responsibility of the DC? (document). They will continue to assess the responsibilities therein and effective means by which the committee can fulfill them.
- Concluded two-year review of ?The Last Great Day/8th Day? study paper. The DC will be present their findings and recommendations to the Council.
- DAC is continuing its study (one-year) review of calendar-related materials and issues.
- Concluded our review of a member-submitted paper on who is the woman of Revelation 12. The DC informed the author that we did a thorough review and favor the identity that is stated in UCG's booklet, *Book of Revelation Unveiled*.
- DC is working on a short paper on marriage and what constitutes a marriage, which when finished will be submitted to the Council.
- DC is reviewing the classification of UCG's 40-some doctrinal and study papers. Once the review is completed they will submit their findings and recommendations to the Council.

The Council went into planned executive session after lunch for the rest of the afternoon. The Council adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Council Reporter

Shawn Cortelyou