

# United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough  
Chairman

Roy O. Holladay  
President

## Letter From the Chairman and President January 3, 2003

Dear Brethren,

The last month of 2002 was a busy one for the work. The Council of Elders just completed a session of meetings where a number of important issues were discussed. We hope you have received all of the daily meeting reports that were sent. In addition, the end of December is a time when many regional events take place. Both of us had the opportunity to attend the Cincinnati Family Weekend held this year in Lexington, Kentucky. More than 1,800 parents, young adults, teenagers and children participated in three days of seminars, Bible studies and recreational activities. It was a great success. Jim O'Brien (pastor of the Cincinnati North and Lexington congregations) and the dozens of volunteers are to be thanked for their tireless work. Certainly the same could be said for other large-scale activities that took place during this time. Thanks to the ministry and brethren who work together to provide exciting and educational experiences for our brethren.

The General Conference of Elders (GCE) is already turning its attention to its duties at the annual meeting in early May. We established a new planning committee last May to work year-round on this yearly event, and we anticipate the best meeting yet. "Maximizing Your Ministry" is this year's theme, and we encourage as many elders as possible to attend, to be involved in the process and to benefit from the content and fellowship.

As a reminder to the ministry of one important item of GCE business, January 17 is the deadline for submitting nominations for the Council of Elders. Regarding potential nominees, during our last Council meeting we discussed and clarified the misunderstanding that some have apparently had as to who is eligible to serve on the Council. Lest there be any confusion, according to our governing documents officers of UCGIA, operation managers, Ministerial Services team members and regional pastors are not prohibited from serving on the Council, provided they are ordained elders of the Church.

In a future "Home Office Update" we plan to give you more detailed statistics from this past year. However, we did want to share a few things with you now in this letter, which we hope you will find encouraging. Here are a few highlights from 2002, as compared with the previous year:

	December 2001	December 2002	Percentage Increase
<b>U.S. Donors</b>	3,249	4,242	31%
<b>U.S. Coworkers</b>	1,476	1,867	26%
<b>U.S. Baptisms</b>	154	226	47%
<b>U.S. Bible Study Course Subscribers</b>	9,487	23,226	145%
<b>U.S. BSC Graduates on the 12-month Tape Program</b>	2,554	3,636	42%
<b>Individual GN Subscribers (worldwide)</b>	279,100	340,019	22%
<b>United News Subscribers (worldwide)</b>	14,673	15,349	5%
<b>World News and Prophecy Subscribers (worldwide)</b>	16,036	18,362	15%

Statistics like these are, of course, not the most important indicator of the work that God is doing. It is growing “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) that is the most important and where the greatest focus must be. Nevertheless, statistics can help us evaluate our efforts and see where we can improve.

It probably goes without saying, but we still face a number of challenges in the months and years to come. During this past year, we began to address some of the greater difficulties we face, but there is more to be done. Your continued prayers in the following areas would be greatly appreciated.

- *Unity of the Faith.* The Bible is full of warnings about false teachings and false teachers who try to deceive and lead away the faithful (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 23-26; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 2 Peter 3:1-4). United has a strong system of governance and review in place to maintain our traditional doctrines, as articulated in the Bible. The Internet has made it much easier for wrong doctrines to be distributed to a wide audience. To help promote unity in our teaching and to address key issues as they arise, we have initiated a project of producing occasional sermon tapes (to be played in all congregations) and sermon and doctrinal outlines (for pastors to create their own sermons) to discuss timely and relevant doctrinal and Christian living topics.
- *Age and Health of the Field Ministry.* As we have written about many times, we have an aging field ministry, with the average age around 56 to 58 years old. Some ministers need to retire for a variety of reasons—many of those being health related. Other ministers who still desire to work are facing serious medical problems. These developments place a two-fold challenge before us: 1) developing new ministers to replace those retiring and 2) financially assisting retiring employees with income and health insurance. During this past year, the Ministerial Candidate Program was started as a long-term program to develop more pastors and elders for our congregations. We hired four (4) new ministers this year, and will probably need to continue hiring replacement pastors at this same pace for the next 10 years or more. In addition, we just created the Ministerial Retirement Task Force to begin studying all aspects and options related to ministerial retirement, income assistance and health care. It is our firm commitment to provide for these long-time servants of God, while making sure that all other programs in the Church are funded at appropriate levels. This task force will spend the next several months exploring all options and possibilities and then make recommendations to the Council and administration.
- *Financial.* The world economy continues to remain flat. While we know that God will provide for our needs, individually and collectively, if we are faithful to Him, we are not completely isolated from the events around us. In addition to an aging ministry, we also have an older membership with a number heading into their retirement years. Others have suffered underemployment and/or unemployment during the recent downturn. We are striving to be frugal in all that we do to make sure that God’s tithes and offerings are being used wisely. Please continue to pray that God will send more laborers into the harvest and that we can be as effective as possible in proclaiming the gospel to the world.

As with every year, we saw a number of transitions in various job responsibilities. A number of field ministers retired from full-time employment. We again had a smooth and supportive transition in the chairmanship and membership of the Council. We also had our first peaceful transition in the office of president. Some transfers took place and other duties were reassigned without transfer. While change of this sort is not always easy, it is necessary from time to time. All of us need something new occasionally to keep us focused and sharp. As an organization, we are also very interested in making sure that workloads are balanced, that people are placed in responsibilities where they are most qualified (“staff from strength”) and that opportunities are shared in a fair and objective manner. Of course, in everything, our focus remains on Christ as *the* Head of the Church and on His prayer and desire for a unified and peaceful Body (John 17:11, 20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16).

One transition we wanted to announce here was a new pastor for our brethren in Kenya. As many of you know, David Baker has taken on additional international responsibilities (the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka), in addition to pastoring three congregations in New York. He simply no longer has the time to pastor in Kenya. Several weeks ago we sent out an E-mail to the ministry asking for volunteers who would be willing to serve Kenya, in addition to their current responsibilities. We want to thank everyone who volunteered—we will remember you for the future! After considering all names and circumstances, we asked John Elliott to take on this responsibility. He will soon make a transitional visit to Kenya with Dave. We want to thank Dave and Dorrie for their diligent service to this area and John and Merrie for their willingness to serve the brethren there.

When we pause and take stock of what has been done in the work over a period of time, whether the past year or the past seven years, we cannot escape being made keenly aware of something else—time is flying by! It seems like only yesterday that Y2K and the computer “millennium bug” dominated the world’s concern at this time of year. That was three years ago! It is not only the times we live in, but how fast time is lived, that should heighten our sense of urgency to do the work of God.

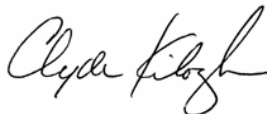
Early in His ministry, Jesus had a strong sense of urgency concerning both His mission and the time He had left to fulfill it. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work,” He said in John 4:34. He then directed His next statement to the disciples: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors” (verses 35-38).

As we now look forward, brethren, let’s bear in mind that nothing in our lives is more important than the labor to which we have been called, nothing is more important than the work God is doing in us and through us. We live in a spiritually and morally bankrupt world whose value system will erode the character and dull the spiritual senses of anyone not clinging closely to God and earnestly doing His work.

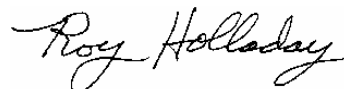
But with the mind of Christ we will maintain the same sense of urgency that He had, as He expressed in John 9:4: “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” Someday we are going to look back, not on a past year, but on a past life, and how we “worked the works” of Him who called us. Undoubtedly, we will marvel at how quickly our time flew by. Knowing that in advance, let us commit daily to working the will of God in our lives, whether it is in personal matters of spiritual overcoming, or collective matters of preaching the gospel.

As Paul told the church at Corinth: “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). God has richly blessed us in so many ways this past year. Thank you for your commitment to continuing to work hard for Him and for one another.

In Christ’s service,



Clyde Kilough  
Chairman



Roy Holladay  
President