

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy O. Holladay
President

Letter From the Chairman December 4, 2003

Greetings, everyone, from Cincinnati,

After two long days of committee work we formally begin today our quarterly Council of Elders meeting here at the home office. As usual, we are staring at a full slate of topics, and we anticipate very good results. We do not take success for granted, however, and ask that you join us in seeking God's wisdom, vision and discernment so that we may be at one with Him and clearly see how to do His will here on earth as it is in heaven.

Our meeting agenda follows at the end of this letter. We are devoting considerable time for analyzing several aspects of one of the most important tasks we have as a church—preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to this world.

Last Saturday night my wife and I had a most interesting opportunity at a dinner party to visit at length with a family that immigrated from Iran some 20 years ago. Discussion of Middle Eastern politics today, particularly the simmering situation in their homeland, eventually drifted into our ideas about the long-term prospects for peace around the world. I was surprised at the father's hopeful optimism for the future, but even more taken aback by his rationale. He is confident, he explained, that the world will find peace, and quite soon, because the world (and especially the younger generation, like our children) is rapidly grasping the futility of fighting and will develop a loving tolerance for all people. Just as we have evolved and improved physically, he said, we are evolving and improving spiritually and mentally, and will find our way to peace.

I told him I share his optimism for the future, but for vastly different reasons. World peace will come in spite of human nature, not because of it! As a Christian, I said, I believe God must intervene in world affairs to bring peace, and it will be through sending Jesus Christ back before humans destroy themselves. When I asked whether he, as a Muslim, believes Allah will intervene to save humanity, he said yes, except not through personally coming to the earth but by helping people become better as he had previously described.

Now I'm not sufficiently familiar with Islamic theology to conclude that his view is representative of common Islamic belief. Regardless, though, for humans to have any hope, they must attach themselves to a belief structure that offers some basis for hope. The critical question is, how valid is the belief, and upon what is it based?

The biblical explanation of human nature, tested and confirmed by the record of human experience, simply makes it hard for most of us to attach ourselves to the belief that humanity's increasing capacity for greater love and tolerance will lead us to peace. At the same time, however, the Bible does give us something much greater to which we attach our belief: the gospel of the Kingdom of God!

The broader scope of the gospel includes the understanding that Jesus Christ will return, not only to save the world from self-destruction, but also to begin on a massive scale the process of conversion—spiritually changing those alienated human hearts.

We envision this happening for the world because we have seen it already in our own lives. As Paul told the Colossians, “We give thanks . . . because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth” (Colossians 1:3, 5-6).

Jesus Christ changed our lives through that message of good news, and He commissioned us to continue to proclaim it as a witness for the world to hear. His true disciples are distinguished by their dedication and personal, deep attachment to that concept. Not only will they set their hope on that gospel, they will be dedicated to spreading its message. Whether tens of thousands, or only ten, respond right now to that preaching, the true disciples will not veer from that mission, for they know it is the truth and the only true source of hope.

Later in his letter (1:23), Paul urged them to not be “moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.” The gospel gives us vision, the hope gives us dedication, and dedication gives us commitment.

That’s why the Council will continually self-examine our efforts, and analyze the world to which we speak, to see how we can preach the gospel most effectively. It’s a huge world, and we’re a small work with a giant task, but with God’s guidance and power to open doors, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Thank you one and all for your encouragement, help and steadfast support, spiritually and physically. Be sure to check the UCG Web site for the daily reports from the Council meetings, or pick up a copy at Sabbath services.

In Christ’s service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clyde Kilough".

Clyde Kilough
Chairman, Council of Elders

Council of Elders Meeting Agenda
December 4-10, 2003 – Cincinnati, Ohio

THURSDAY – DEC. 4

MORNING

Chairman's Opening Comments and Approval of August 2003 Minutes (C. Kilough)

President's Report (Roy Holladay)

Treasurer's Report (Tom Kirkpatrick)

Ministerial Services Report (Richard Pinelli)

Media Operations Report (Peter Eddington)

AFTERNOON

Executive Session

- Ordination and credentialing requests; personnel matters (any items not covered during this session will be continued on Monday)

FRIDAY – DEC. 5

MORNING

Doctrine Committee (Jim Franks)

- Update on papers and questions that have come to the Doctrine Committee
- Music in the Bible Study Paper
- Voting and Running for Public Office Study Paper

AFTERNOON

Feast Video (Peter Eddington)

- Evaluate 2003 Feast video
- Determine plans for 2004

SUNDAY – DEC. 7

MORNING

Preaching the Gospel (Clyde Kilough)

- (Continuation of discussions in previous meetings regarding our efforts to preach the gospel.) What is the mindset of the world today, and how do we effectively reach it with the gospel?

AFTERNOON

2004 General Conference of Elders (Bob Dick)

- Planning the Annual Meeting – report and recommendations via teleconference from Dave Register, chairman of GCE planning committee

- Proposed revisions to Council of Elders nominee questionnaire
- Proposed Amendments

MONDAY – DEC. 8

MORNING

Media and Communications (Peter Eddington)

- Further discussion from last meeting concerning preaching the gospel through television
- Factors relating to home office-produced TV programs
- Future of cable-access programs currently underway

AFTERNOON

Evangelism Task Force – Progress Update (Doug Horchak)

- Status report on study of biblical principles of preaching the gospel

Standardizing Procedures for Council Committee Work (Clyde Kilough)

- Proposal for improving efficiency

Executive Session

- Continue any items remaining from Thursday

TUESDAY – DEC. 9

MORNING

Christ-Centered Servant Leadership Task Force Report (Richard Thompson & Ken Giese)

- Conclusions and recommendations from study Council commissioned to assess CSL issues

AFTERNOON

Retirement Task Force Report & Recommendations (Roy Holladay & Britt Taylor)

- Conclusions and recommendations from study Council commissioned for employee retirement planning

WEDNESDAY – DEC. 10

MORNING

Education & Ministerial Services Committee (Richard Thompson)

- Sexual Misconduct Policy & Youth Protection Guidelines

Ministerial Services (Richard Pinelli)

- Proposals for Church Hymnal
- Proposed addition to options for Sabbath services format

Wrap-up & Announcements (Clyde Kilough)