

**United Church of God, *an International Association***  
**Council of Elders Meeting Report**  
**December 10, 2003 - Cincinnati OH**

In a shortened final day of meetings, Richard Thompson updated the Council on the status of the “Sexual Misconduct Policy and Youth Protection Guidelines.” Richard Pinelli, Ministerial Services operation manager, sought input from the Council concerning the production of a final version of the Church hymnal and on a suggestion regarding Sabbath services format.

**Sexual Misconduct Policy and Youth Protection Guidelines**

Mr. Thompson reported that the “Sexual Misconduct Policy and Youth Protection Guidelines” statement is still under review. The Education and Ministerial Services Committee has edited the document several times. The next step is for Larry Darden, the Church’s Legal Counsel, to have the draft reviewed by an attorney who is experienced with cases involving sexual misconduct. The Council will receive a copy of the proposed final draft of the policy in the February, 2004 meetings. Mr. Thompson emphasized for the protection of our youth and for the Church itself, it is extremely important that time be taken to be certain the policy is carefully written.

**Hymnals and Sabbath Service Format**

Mr. Pinelli updated the Council on progress toward the printing of a hardbound and final version of a Church hymnal.

Regarding the current situation, Mr. Pinelli suggested that pastors who wish to do so may have the hymnal and supplemental hymnal bound together into one volume, as several have already done. The two can be combined with a plastic or wire binding for about \$1 or \$2 per book. He said that the cost can be included in a congregation’s subsidy request.

Steve Myers, who coordinated the production of the supplemental hymnal, has submitted considerations for creating a hardback and final version of a hymnal, which would include well over 200 hymns. The same criteria used for the supplemental hymnal would be used to select the additional hymns to be included in this version.

Mr. Pinelli commented that he would like to see the new hymnal completed within the next two years. The total cost of the project for 20,000 copies (including printing, distribution, song leader and pianist editions and accompaniment CDs) is estimated at \$100,000.

Several favorable comments were offered. None of the Council members expressed any concerns about continuing the effort.

Clyde Kilough remarked that the Church has a legacy of excellence. Our current hymnal is good quality in terms of content, but we need better quality in terms of printing and binding. He also suggested that when the new hymnal is complete, that the song leader and accompanist versions as well as the CD accompanist versions be released at the same time as the hymnal.

Joel Meeker commented that a high quality hymnal has a unifying effect for the Church, adding to our sense of stability.

Robert Dick asked if there was a timetable for the hymn selection process. Mr. Pinelli said it would fall within the two-year timeframe, but he wasn't sure yet when that process would begin. He mentioned that Mr. Myers has several hundred hymns on-hand already after the completion of the recent supplemental hymnal project.

Mr. Pinelli also led a discussion revisiting a memo dated April 22, 1999 on the topic of Sabbath services format. A proposal had been made to Ministerial Services for slightly modifying the format to allow for the opening prayer before the congregational hymn singing. By unanimous motion the Council remanded to Ministerial Services any administration of experimenting with the proposed changes and/or additions to the format and to bring recommendations back to the Council at a future time.

### **Dates for Upcoming Council Meetings**

There was a quick review of upcoming meeting dates. In February, 2004 the Council committees will meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> followed by Council meetings February 25-March 2. The next meetings will follow the General Conference of Elders, on May 4-6, 2004. For August 2004, meetings for the committees will be held meet Aug 23-24, followed by the Council meetings on Aug 25-31.

The Council of Elders meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Don Henson

-end-

© 2003 United Church of God, *an International Association*