

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
March 1, 2004 – Cincinnati, OH

Today the Council of Elders concluded its meetings for this session. The morning started with an update from the Godly Leadership Task Force. Attention then turned to the discussion of an amendment that the Council has been preparing for consideration at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders. A few items were completed that had been tabled earlier in the week. The Council concluded its business in an executive session and adjourned at 6 p.m.

Godly Leadership Task Force

In December 2003 the Council, by resolution, charged the Godly Leadership Task Force "...to develop a clear and concise definition of Godly leadership including the aspects of servanthood, leadership, humility and developing people..." The task force was also directed to provide the Council with a progress report during these meetings, which was to include proposed definitions of terms.

Task force chairman Mark Winner provided the Council with an interim report that included their working definition of godly leadership and an overview of the scope of their efforts. Mr. Winner highlighted a number of points that are included in the project overview:

- One cannot rule or administer good government without leadership. Godly leadership is of divine origin and cannot be developed apart from the assistance of God's Holy Spirit.
- The practice of Jesus Christ was to train leaders who, by example and teaching, trained those called into the Church.
- It is the ministry's responsibility to lead in a godly manner and to teach others by instruction and example how to lead in a godly manner. Therefore, it would seem natural and useful for the Church's leadership to initiate a program that would focus on godly leadership in the process of preparing a people for the kingdom of God.
- The issue at hand is to apply Jesus' instruction in Matthew 20, making a conscious effort to apply every aspect in our current ministry and to teach them more fully to the brethren.
- Godly leadership isn't separate from living Christianity, but is a matter of emphasis. Can we "raise the bar" and continue to improve in our service to God and each other?
- Emphasizing godly leadership in a structured manner is an effective way to help the entire body of Christ to grow. It does not undermine any office or authority God has placed in the Church, nor does it deny the need for ministers to lovingly disseminate correction and reproof as authorized in

Scripture. It is an emphasis that will truly help us fulfill our commission to “prepare a people” for rulership in the Kingdom of God.

Mr. Winner’s report also included an outline of the report that the task force plans to present to the Council in August, 2004 – including a vision statement, mission statement, strategy statement and an outline of the godly leadership program.

Much of the discussion focused on the task force’s definition of godly leadership: “Godly leadership is exercising righteousness to serve all in developing spiritual maturity.”

Mario Seigle expressed concern that the presentation is losing the focus of intent that the Council had in mind by emphasizing “exercising righteousness” and the importance of obedience rather than the concept of becoming a servant and leader like Jesus. He also pointed out that humility should be included in the definition since it is integral to godly leadership.

Leon Walker stated he felt there was a need for more clarity in the definition. He suggested that the definition needs to be general enough to include a more complete definition.

Aaron Dean commented that because other groups had misused the term, the task force seemed to be intentionally avoiding the phrase “servant leadership” - even though that is the crux of the matter. Mr. Winner replied that the task force is not going to hesitate to emphasize the qualities of a godly servant.

Richard Thompson, who as chairman of the Education and Ministerial Services Committee and is working closely with the task force, said that the key to what is being developed is included in point number three in their block outline, which says that "exercising righteousness" in a leadership context means:

1. Following Christ,
2. Discerning between serving and being a servant and
3. Becoming a humble overseer.

Mr. Winner explained that the task force intentionally wrote a succinct definition of godly leadership, intending to flesh the full meaning of the definition in the body of the presentation.

Clyde Kilough suggested an alternate definition: “Godly leadership is the exercise of righteousness in a manner that serves others in the development of spiritual maturity.”

Tony Wasilkoff noted with respect to the overall content that it would be important to teach concepts of godly leadership to more than just our baptized members. The concepts should be presented in a way that would apply to children, teens and young adults as well as adults in attendance who are not yet baptized.

Mr. Winner commented that the task force will schedule a teleconference soon to discuss input from the Council on the definition of godly leadership and their comments on other aspects of the report. He also noted that the three new members (Jack Hendron, Larry Salyer and Bill Winner) are up to speed on the task force's work over the last three years and have already contributed significantly to the effort. The task force plans a one-day meeting immediately following the General Conference in May and three days of face-to-face meetings in June.

Based on today's report the Council passed a motion unanimously affirming its support of the efforts and the general direction of the Godly Leadership Task Force, with some refinements and development yet to be accomplished.

ABC Resolution

Mr. Thompson presented the Council with a resolution chartering the study of the possibility of expanding the ABC program, to be completed by full-time instructors and home office personnel. They are to present to the Council the financial impact and other considerations of such an expansion.

As noted in yesterday's report, this is not a commitment to expand ABC. It is a study into the possibility of doing so.

The resolution passed by 11-0 (Mr. Kilough abstained).

Correction to February 26 Report

The report on February 26 on page 11 indicated that Leon Walker assisted in writing the United Church of God Bylaws. That is incorrect. Mr. Walker was not involved in that process.

Proposal to Amend Constitution 5.1.1

Aaron Dean presented the Council with two versions of an amendment to 5.1.1 of the Constitution, which states that the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church may be amended by a three-fourths majority of "... the General Conference as it is constituted at the time of a duly called meeting of the General Conference." The purpose of the amendment was to change the paragraph to read that the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church could be amended "... by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the valid ballots cast by the General Conference." The reason for the proposed amendment is that one-fourth or more of the General Conference usually does not participate in the annual balloting, which means that it is unlikely that a change to doctrine could ever be passed even if 100 percent of the elders agreed with the concept.

Robert Dick pointed out that if this amendment were passed it would allow a minority of elders to change doctrine – a position diametrically opposed to United's philosophy. For example, approximately 290 of 455 elders voted in last year's General

Conference of Elders. If three-fourths of the valid ballots cast could change doctrine, last year doctrine would theoretically have been changed by 48 percent of the GCE membership.

Jim Franks reminded the Council that the proposed amendment raises the issue of interpretation of the Constitution, which is the responsibility of the General Conference. The General Conference would need to determine whether they believe that a two-thirds majority vote on an amendment would be allowed to modify a section of the Constitution that requires passage by a three-fourths majority. That question would need to be decided on a separate ballot, with a simple majority (51 percent) required for passage. Mr. Franks suggested it would be better for the General Conference to ballot on its interpretation of the Constitution before an amendment is submitted to change that section.

Mr. Franks also pointed out that the General Conference has already approved the Provisional Manner of Amending the Fundamental Beliefs, which defines the process for making changes to the Fundamental Beliefs. He suggested that what we need is a methodology for officially changing our teaching on doctrines other than those in the Fundamental Beliefs. He concluded that it would be better to consider the process of doctrinal change rather than amending the majority requirements in the Constitution.

Leon Walker suggested that the majority required to change the Fundamental Beliefs remain at three-fourths, but a lower threshold be established for official changes to our understanding of Scripture or other doctrines.

Mr. Franks agreed, pointing out that the three-fourths majority is only referenced in context of the Fundamental Beliefs. There may be a way to define another process for changes to doctrine that are outside of the Fundamental Beliefs. Those changes would still need to be approved by the General Conference.

Mr. Kilough commented that a couple of years ago some thought was given as to how to increase the percentage of elders who participate in the balloting. He pointed out that some of those suggestions were never implemented and that it would be better to try other approaches to increasing the number of elders who participate before amending majority requirements specified in our documents.

Mr. Kilough also noted that the discussion had migrated from editing a proposed amendment to the bigger subject of the process of doctrinal change and the related topic of lack of participation in voting. He stated that he would rather see the Council offer some specific solutions to solving those issues before trying to amend the documents.

Mr. Walker agreed that the Council should start fresh and rethink these matters from a different perspective.

Joel Meeker said he appreciated the effort on the amendments but agreed that it would be best to take a new approach. Nothing, he pointed out, is more important than doctrinal purity – so it's important to get it right and have an effective process.

Mr. Dean agreed that he would notify the Amendment Committee that he wished to withdraw the proposed amendment to 5.1.1 of the Constitution.

Mr. Kilough remanded these matters to Bob Dick and Jim Franks, chairmen respectively of the Ethics, Roles and Rules Committee and the Doctrine Committee, to confer and to report their recommendations to the Council in the May meetings.

Potential Conflict with Proposed Amendment to Bylaw 9.2

A question has arisen in regard to a proposed amendment to Bylaw 9.2 which states that a member of the management team may not, except under specific and limited circumstances, be a member of the Council of Elders. At the 2004 GCE meeting an Operation Manager is on the ballot for the Council of Elders. The question is, what would happen if he is elected to the Council and the proposed amendment also passes.

After discussion, the Council concluded that Mr. Kilough will address this matter in a letter he will soon be sending to invite elders to the annual meeting. In the letter he will urge them to vote for the people they would like to have on the Council and to vote for the amendments they feel are valid, without worrying about a hypothetical set of circumstances that could result. If the voting does result in some kind of conflict or dilemma, the Council will deal with it at that time.

Interpretation of Bylaw 12.2.2.8

The Council exercised its responsibility to interpret the intent or meaning of the Bylaws by formally rendering its opinion on the application of Bylaw 12.2.2.8.

In reference to proposed amendments submitted to the Council by the Amendment Committee, the Bylaw states, "Lack of action on the part of the Council within thirty (30) days will be interpreted as permission for those proposed amendments which were approved by the Committee to go forward to the General Conference of Elders for possible endorsement."

The Council unanimously adopted a resolution stipulating that "endorsement" of a proposed amendment "... refers to the receipt of support for a proposed amendment by twenty-five (25) percent of the General Conference of Elders in the event of Council of Elders inactivity..."

What Is Leaven?

Mr. Seigle reviewed the edits suggested by the Council in yesterday's review of the paper on the question of what is leaven. Mr. Seigle proposed a resolution, which passed unanimously, adopting the paper as the Church's official answer to the question.

Miscellaneous Business Items

Several miscellaneous business items were quickly dispatched, drawing the session to a close.

- Tom Kirkpatrick requested a “Thrift Plan Resolution” to maintain the Church’s compliance with government regulations for the 403(b) plan. The resolution was passed unanimously.
- Dr. Kirkpatrick reviewed an e-mail he planned to send to one of the international offices in regard to their requested subsidy for the 2004-2005 fiscal year.
- The Council selected May 15-16 as the dates for the 2005 Annual Meeting of the General Conference of Elders.

The Council closed out its meetings for this week in executive session, starting at 2 p.m. and adjourning at 6 p.m.

Don Henson

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