

**United Church of God, *an International Association***  
**Council of Elders Meeting Report**  
**August 26, 2005 – Cincinnati, OH**

Robert Dick called the Council to order at 9 a.m. Most of the open portion of the morning session consisted of a report by Clyde Kilough on recent decisions and developments regarding the media center and the home office production of a television program. The Council spent the final hour of the morning and the afternoon in executive session.

**Media Center**

Mr. Kilough outlined a timeline of Council decisions that led to the building of the media center in the home office.

- In August 1999 the Council adopted a public proclamation statement, written by the Media and Communications Committee.
- In February 2000 the Council approved a “Comprehensive Media Strategy,” by the home office Media and Communications Services operation, based on the proclamation statement. The document specified media goals, strategies and actions to be taken in print media, Internet, radio, video and television efforts.
- In August 2003 the Council passed a resolution approving the implementation of a document titled “Broadcast Television Media Strategy,” also developed by Media and Communications Services, which included a plan for the building of a media center at the home office and the production of a broadcast television program.
- In June 2005 construction began on the media center. Taping of a television program is slated to begin in November of this year.

After Mr. Kilough’s review and introduction, Peter Eddington, Media and Communications Services operation manager, led the Council on a tour. Standing in the nearly completed studio, Mr. Eddington described the finished product. The studio will have a news-center appearance, with a desk large enough to seat three men for the program’s discussion format. In the background will be the image of a globe and the program logo against a skyline, along with six video monitors and a plasma monitor. At the left-front of the stage there will be a desk and a computer. Thirty-nine lighting fixtures will hang above the set, casting various colors for emphasis. Three high-definition video cameras will be on the floor in front of the set and a fourth high-definition camera will be mounted on a boom for overhead shots. Much of the equipment is already on hand. The rest will be ordered and delivered shortly. All of the construction and equipment purchases are within budget.

Mr. Eddington stated that initially the program will be produced in standard definition format due to broadcasting restrictions, with the capability of upgrading to high definition when that becomes feasible.

After the tour of the media center, Mr. Kilough continued his summary of the results of two days of meetings with those who will be directly involved in the production of the program. In addition to Mr. Kilough, those present at the August 3 and 4 meetings included Mr. Eddington, Aaron Booth, Clay Thornton, Darris McNeely, Howard Davis, Steve Myers, Gary Petty and John LaBissioniere. The meeting agenda was ambitious and each item on the agenda was completed. Items that were discussed:

- Selection of a name for the program.
- Selection of the main presenters.
- Finalization of the program format.
- Selection of four main content categories for the first 12 months of programming.
- Establishment of the recording schedule for the next 12 months.
- Selection of specific subjects and guests for the programs.
- Discussion of the review process.
- Discussion of program success analysis and measurements.

Mr. Kilough and other participants described the meeting as very productive and encouraging. He emphasized the reality that we are “average Joes,” but that with God’s direction, we can do an above-average work. He used a baseball analogy, comparing our efforts to being in the minor leagues of media. But we are taking another step forward on the learning and developmental curve, preparing us to move to a higher level as we have opportunity.

The main program hosts will be Gary Petty, Steve Myers and Darris McNeely. All three have been involved for several years in the production of the *Good News* television production in Beloit, Wisconsin. In addition, 30 of our elders are scheduled to be guests on the program.

The program will consist of an introduction, followed by three eight-minute segments and finishing up with concluding comments. The presenter will make the introductory and concluding comments, and in each segment he will interview one or two guests on the program topic. Howard Davis will produce advertisements to be shown between the segments. Each program will have one 60-second and two 30-second spot ads. We currently have 32 booklets in addition to *The Good News*, *Vertical Thought* and *World News and Prophecy* that can be advertised. In addition to being used on the program, the commercial spots will also be suitable for use on our Web sites.

Specific program subjects will fall into four general content categories:

1. A vision of the Kingdom of God. These programs will present a true vision of the purpose of life and the Kingdom of God.
2. Understanding God’s righteousness. These programs will focus on doctrinal teachings and how our understanding differs from mainstream Christianity. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of obedience, repentance and the need to be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.

3. World events and current trends. Programs in this category will explain end-time prophecy and give understanding of what is happening in our world. This is an urgent message that can lead to personal repentance.
4. Personal and collective growth. These programs will emphasize the practical application of God's way of life in our marriages, families and in every aspect of life. There will be a focus on the needs of young adults, older teens and generation-X demographics.

The production plan calls for seven or eight two-day recording sessions with four programs to be recorded at each, for a total of 28 to 32 programs in the 2005-2006 fiscal year. For example, recording sessions will be scheduled on Wednesday and Thursday. A preproduction meeting will take place on Wednesday morning and then two programs will be taped on Wednesday afternoon. The same pattern would be repeated on Thursday, with a preproduction meeting in the morning and two more programs taped that afternoon.

About 40 specific subjects were suggested and presenters were assigned to each, aiming for a balanced approach within the four general categories. Each program will strive to show relevance, illustrate how this information affects the viewers' lives and appeal to them to take action.

Several evaluation criteria were outlined as measurements to define the success of our efforts:

1. Did we meet the production plan of 28 to 32 finished programs during the 2005-2006 fiscal year?
2. Did the staff and production members each do his part to improve both the content and technical quality of the programs?
3. The writing and review team, along with management and staff, will evaluate the edited programs using the following criteria:
  - A. Did this program inform the viewing audience about the gospel of the Kingdom of God?
  - B. Did this program represent the United Church of God in a dignified and godly manner?
  - C. Did this program raise our internal standards in terms of production quality, commercials, use of photos, video clips, graphics, etc.?
  - D. Did this program challenge the audience and motivate them to request the advertised literature?
  - E. Did the presenters deliver the material clearly, and did they follow the prepared outlines?
  - F. Did the presenters conduct themselves in a professional manner in this program?
4. Are the number of telephone responses for advertised literature increasing, and have we cross-promoted our various media efforts?
5. Are we increasing viewership of the video/multimedia Web site through cross-promotion of our various media efforts?

In addition, presenters will review and critique their previous programming efforts during the preproduction meetings.

There will also be a doctrinal review team, consisting of the presenters and six pastors, who will assure that the outlines, scripts and finished programs are doctrinally sound.

The finished program will be distributed on DVDs. The audio track will be recorded onto CDs for use for the radio program, so there will not be a need for an additional radio production effort. Video and audio clips from the programs will also be used on our Web sites.

The production staff will include Mr. Eddington as director and Mr. Thornton as producer/editor. Mr. LaBissoniere will be the program's time-buying agent. Volunteers will donate their time to work as cameramen, audio technician, lighting grip, makeup artist and set decorator.

The program will be aired on the 70 cable-access stations that currently carry the *Good News* and *Tomorrow* programs. We will pursue as many additional cable-access stations as possible, through the sponsorship of local members and pastors.

In the final portion of his presentation, Mr. Kilough explained in some detail how the program name was chosen. He said that the discussion during the meetings started with a consideration of the four levels of contact that the Church has with the public.

1. The most impersonal and basic contact is informational—such as cardholders, bulletin boards and Internet banners.
2. The next level is our contact through radio and television.
3. The first and second levels should lead people to our core printed material, such as *The Good News*, *Bible Study Course* and booklets.
4. Ultimately this progression leads to contact with a minister and hopefully with church attendance and becoming part of a congregation.

Mr. Kilough pointed out that we assume that the level two audience ranges from totally secular to deeply religious, but they have little or no understanding of the teachings of United. The television and radio programs are not designed to address the Church, but an audience in the world in general that is increasingly biblically illiterate and confused. Since the content must reach the people where they are, the name must also do so.

- Some 75 possible names had been submitted by 30 people, but the group turned its focus to the concepts we are trying to convey. Key scriptures that help to frame the media philosophy in general and the approach of the television program in particular include Jeremiah 6:16-17 and Acts 3:19-21. Both passages emphasize the need to clearly teach and renew understanding

of God's instruction and to continue proclaiming the message that focuses on the return of Jesus Christ, as has been taught by God's servants "since the world began."

The Council listened to the rationale for developing a program name, considered a proposed name and, after further discussion on Sunday, asked for additional exploration into possible titles for the program.

In conclusion, Mr. Kilough emphasized that broadcast television is a big step for the Church internally—yet externally, producing a program for cable-access stations is a small step. We don't know where this will lead, but the experience of producing a television program will prepare us and increase our abilities to communicate the gospel if or when other doors are opened to us in the future.

### **Amended Statement of Media Philosophy**

Following Mr. Kilough's presentation, Victor Kubik, chairman of the Media and Communications Committee, reviewed with the Council the development of the Church's media philosophy. The original document, which identified 18 points that made the Church so effective in its use of media in past decades, has undergone several reviews and minor edits since it was first adopted. Based on the development of the document, Mr. Kubik suggested that the Council rescind the media philosophy of August 2004 and replace it with a revised statement. The approved statement follows.

### **Media Philosophy of United Church of God** Approved by Council of Elders, August 26, 2005

Preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God is a divine commission given to the Church. The Bible, from the prophets to Jesus Christ and the apostles, establishes clear principles of how to present the gospel most effectively. These principles still apply.

The gospel message, which includes God's offer of the gift of salvation, shows His love for humanity. We must reflect that same love in the way we deliver His gospel to the world. We seek to provide the world with the message of hope for salvation, to help those who believe and repent, and to warn all of the consequences of sin.

We must speak and write in a way that challenges our audience's beliefs in a manner that is simple to understand, engaging, convincing and compelling. We must tailor the message to fit different cultural, national, religious and linguistic groups.

In a spiritually blind world, the deep truths of God are most effectively presented in a manner that leads from "milk" to "meat." For that reason, we must present the truth of God in a way that does not overwhelm people in either content or quantity.

The message is more important than those who deliver it. Consequently, we believe in focusing attention on the message of truth rather than on those who

sponsor it. Furthermore, we believe in delivering the gospel primarily in the public arena rather than inviting people into the Church to receive it.

We believe we are required to freely give the truth to the world. Therefore, we offer our materials without charge or obligation.

We understand this is not the only day of salvation and that God alone can call someone, which means we are not responsible for converting the world. Nevertheless, we are still compelled by our mission to preach the gospel with urgency to all the world and care for those whom God calls.

We are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. As ambassadors, our message must transcend the ideologies, politics and religions of this world.

The Council completed the balance of its business for the day in executive session.

Don Henson

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