

**United Church of God, *an International Association***  
**Council of Elders Meeting Report**  
**Aug. 12, 2008—Milford, Ohio**

On the second day of the August Council meetings, Clyde Kilough brought forward the administration's proposals and recommendations of "how do we proceed from here." As a result of the passage of the resolution to rescind the 2007 relocation decision in May 2008, the Council resolved that the president bring recommendations for determining how to proceed from this point in addressing this strategic issue.

**How Do We Proceed From Here?**

Mr. Kilough presented a seven-page document to the Council. It included a review of what the new Strategic Plan and Operation Plan address about having necessary facilities for our training and educational programs. Immersion education provides the optimal growth atmosphere for our ABC and pastoral training participants, and on-site housing is a critical component. He also noted that we need better media production facilities that will allow us to expand and improve our program formats. We also need room soon for adding manpower to expand and improve our Web delivery capabilities.

The next section of the document included the facts of where we are now. We currently own 81 acres of land in Denton, Texas. The original proposal costs for construction and development are now out of date, and will be higher as time goes by. The projections we presented two years ago concerning manpower are coming to pass. This year we have three pastors seeking retirement, and others have indicated to us their plans for the future. The need for pastoral training is now, and it will only increase. To implement the tremendous opportunities for expanding our media reach and increasing our effectiveness, we will require more manpower and better facilities.

Three options were then presented with the understanding that the restoring of trust needs to be considered as part of the process of going forward. The options presented did not have cost estimates for implementation. Therefore, whichever option the Council would choose, the next step would be for the administration to conduct a due diligence study of costs, manpower needs, etc. The study would then be presented to the Council with a detailed proposal for final approval.

The first option was to conduct a strategic facilities study. This would include a task force comprised of Council, administration and GCE representatives. The Council and administration would develop a "scope of work" for the task force. It would involve standardizing the needs and criteria for any location decision and the hiring of an outside consultant. Key areas of communication would include the Council communicating the entire study plan to the GCE. The task force would give regular progress reports to the Council, GCE and administration, and the Council would communicate the results to the GCE. This option has the advantage that the use of an outside consulting firm would

satisfy any concerns about a lack of objectivity. One of the disadvantages is that this option could take a long time—up to two years—and it doesn't address our immediate needs for manpower and space, without which we will be increasingly hampered.

The second option is to decide to build in the Cincinnati area. The administration would choose a "location task force." As with the first option, there would be a need to set the "scope of work" and communication efforts would be employed just as thoroughly. The advantages to this option are that we can move forward faster, and it does not put the GCE through another relocation decision. A disadvantage is that it does not provide a comparative study of locations and, without a fair study, it could alienate the almost 50 percent of the GCE who favored the move to Texas.

The third option is to remodel the current facility, concurrently implementing the strategic facilities study (option 1). This option does not expand, but remodels the current building. It could meet the immediate needs for the next three to five years. This option would allow for the warehouse to be moved to a nearby, leased facility. We could create a multimedia auditorium in what is currently the warehouse space. We could create more space for offices and conference rooms. This option allows for the cautious approach, satisfying the concern that the original proposal was too hurried. It does meet the immediate needs for increased office space and allows for time to implement the strategic facilities study. Also, it does not increase the size of our current facility that could reduce our future ability to sell. The disadvantage is that it does not provide for on-site housing for ABC and ministerial training, and it means investing money in the short term that we cannot count on being recovered when the facility is sold.

Mr. Kilough then read the administration's recommendation: The president and the operation managers agreed that option 1 focuses on addressing the long-term vision. It is a critical and logical element in sound strategic thinking. The downside to option 1 is the time factor, as task force work can be very slow and lengthy.

Therefore, the third option, which calls for the remodeling of the current facility and concurrently implementing the strategic facilities study, offers the most advantages at this time. It gives us the best balance of choices and the greatest flexibility.

Mr. Kilough then opened the floor for discussion. Council members stated their appreciation for the work and effort that went into preparing these proposals.

The Council discussed various issues such as whether some research from the past studies could be used again. Other topics included the need to have set criteria standards for a facility's usage. A lot of questions dealt with how the current facility could be remodeled, and if we should consider hiring a professional efficiency expert to maximize our current space.

Discussion then led to future planning that included the design of future buildings. Mr. Kilough said when we first moved into this current facility, it was great, and then we needed more room, and we still do. We do need acreage to use in case there is even more

growth. There needs to be long-term planning that accommodates growth that we may not be able to anticipate at this point. We do have real tangible problems with our current facility that is now outgrown.

Robert Dick thanked Mr. Kilough and the staff for the material they provided the Council. Mr. Dick then asked the Council to consider providing the administration with a sense of direction as to which option the administration should now focus on. This will be part of the agenda for the last day's meeting.

### **Other Business—the GCE Planning Task Force**

Mr. Dick introduced David Register, chairman of the GCE Planning Task Force, to review the survey results of the last GCE meeting in May 2008 and to present preliminary plans for the May 2009 GCE conference.

Mr. Register noted that the attendance was lower this year and that only 78 percent or 368 of the 473 elders balloted this year.

There were many comments on the surveys about the high cost of travel expenses. Most people spent between \$350 and \$500. Over half of the attendees drove more than 300 miles round-trip and almost 90 percent plan to attend next year. In fact, 25 percent have attended all 14 years. Some mentioned they didn't like the lack of unity and the negative atmosphere.

A suggestion from the task force was to allot more time to the international reports—up to 15 minutes per area, which the Council approved.

Some Council members proposed having an open mike Q&A session with the whole Council as was done in previous years. Mr. Register responded that only 38 percent liked that activity—it was the lowest rated of all, and so it wasn't done this past GCE. Instead we have used the online Q&A approach by which everyone can see the questions and the answers since only about 40 percent of the GCE attend the annual conference.

A question was raised as to whether plans have included meeting in other parts of the country for the GCE meetings. Mr. Register said that it had been discussed, but that a number of elders prefer meeting near the home office.

The Council also discussed the needs and purposes for having an international elders meeting with the president and home office staff. Unfortunately, last year the hall set-up was not as conducive as it could have been. Between now and the December meetings, there will be discussion between the international Council members and the president as to what will be the purposes and agenda of that meeting.

The Council by unanimous resolution formally agreed to use the Holiday Inn Eastgate, Cincinnati, Ohio, for the May 3-4, 2009, GCE annual conference.

The task force also presented four choices for themes. The Council agreed to proceed with the theme “Making Disciples: A Whole Church Effort.” There were some concepts listed in another of the theme ideas that will also be incorporated.

Mr. Dick thanked Mr. Register and the task force for their work and efforts. He mentioned that the Council is very sensitive to the desires of the GCE and asked the Council if it could remand to the task force the question as to whether there should be an open mike for Q&A. It was unanimously approved, which means the GCE task force will now consider this as an idea and will bring back their findings at the December meetings.

Finally, Mr. Dick discussed the questions that had come up about subsidizing elders to attend the GCE. In the first conference of December 1995, all elders were subsidized. Since then it has become financially unsustainable to do so. The Council, in December 2006, had established another task force to look into the frequency of meetings. They were to consider whether there would be a need to have a full conference each year or if, instead, every third year there could be a full conference at which all elders would be fully subsidized. Since the Council task force had not fully completed that study, Mr. Register was asked if the GCE task force could look into that possibility and take on that study. Mr. Register will ask the task force and report back to the Council.

The Council concluded its day with an executive session.

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