

United Church of God, an International Association
Council of Elders Meeting Report
Feb. 24, 2009—Milford, Ohio

On the second day of the February meetings, Robert Dick led the Council through a review of each of the guiding principles, positioning statements, goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan. In monitoring the Strategic Plan, each of the operation managers was asked to self-grade his areas of responsibilities, and each Council member provided his personal assessment of the plan.

The Council also spent time discussing the media mix proposal that Clyde Kilough had presented on the previous day. Later, in an evening session, the Council discussed a variety of Roles and Rules Committee business items.

Review of the Strategic Plan

Mr. Dick pointed out that today the Council would engage the administration with questions and comments about the Strategic Plan.

First, Mr. Kilough said that the self-grading from the administration had begun with yesterday's meetings in which Larry Salyer gave his comments concerning the Media area. In discussing Ministerial Services, Jim Franks said that we are increasing educational opportunities for the membership. In regards to the objective of the retention of youth—that is an issue we are working on to establish the metrics for measurement. He went on to say that there are a number of reasons why youth leave, and when the causes are identified, we can then see better how we can help to retain our youth.

Mr. Franks also said that from the surveys of the members, in which over 3,200 members responded, the highest positive that was noted is the Feast of Tabernacles experience. David Register said that we decided not to send out a survey every year, but will be sending out the survey every other year.

In the goal of Organization, Mr. Kilough said that we have established baselines from the surveys. Performance reviews are also in the works. Jason Lovelady said that a lot of work is to be done, but we are working hard to implement these programs, especially in the area of human resources policies. We also have a good start on internal communications.

Council Comments:

Mr. Dick asked the Council, in terms of monitoring, how each member would assess the progress with our strategic planning.

- Richard Thompson: Even though we are new at this, we have been able to establish benchmarks, and that is commendable. I'm satisfied and happy with it.

- Roy Holladay: I would echo the same thing as Richard. Also, we were told that if in the first year we graded this as a “C,” we were doing a good job. A lot of work has gone into it.
- Darris McNeely: We should have a continual drip of information explaining what this is all about, to be sent out to the membership and ministry as an ongoing part of communication.
- Bob Berendt: Optimal efforts have been made.
- Robin Webber: We are making a course turn, and I applaud it.
- Richard Pinelli: When we started in 1995, we started pretty basic. From then to now, we have really matured as the organization has grown up. We have done more than we have thought could be accomplished.
- Victor Kubik: This has been a Herculean process. We didn’t choose the easiest strategic planning method. It is complex and hats off to all those who do this work.
- Bill Eddington: We are only six months into this program. The report on the progress on achieving the objectives needs to be labeled using the terms “complete, on-track or behind.”
- Paul Kieffer: The implementation of this is what we didn’t have before and now we have strategic planning in place.
- Aaron Dean: Change will happen and so we have to reaffirm our assumptions as time goes on. The relationship issues are important. We have done a lot.
- Clyde Kilough: This plan is what guides us. It gives us structure and a focus to concentrate on. We can produce things quickly. Everyone has the same documents.
- Robert Dick: I’m quite pleased. There is a saying: It is impossible to push a rope. If we had an administration that didn’t want to go this route, this would have been a difficult task. But the administration was fully willing to pick up a hard task and have not been footdraggers. This has created synergy between Council and the administration.

After the assessment given by the Council, Roy Holladay mentioned that there is nothing noted in this plan about being an example as a means of preaching the gospel. Mr. Dick commented that we need to teach people to be an example and light to others. It is hoped that members will bond with new people coming into the Church.

The concept of preaching the gospel by example would be “To Be Determined” (TBD), and was remanded to the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee to produce a statement on this topic with input from Ministerial Services.

The Media Mix Proposal Discussion

In the December meetings, a proposal was presented that the Council would consider including *Beyond Today* in the objectives of the goal for Public Proclamation.

Mr. Holladay said that in discussion with the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee, it was felt *BT* should be elevated higher in the Strategic Plan as an objective.

In reviewing the strategy of the “media mix,” Mr. Kilough said that “media” describes all the tools we have to preach the gospel, and “mix” is the coordinated blend of all these tools with the Web at the hub of it. The media plan does elevate television; it isn’t buried in the mix. He said the media mix would help to achieve a target number of *BT* responses and that *BT* would more appropriately be a strategy than an objective.

Mr. Dick stated that the Council takes ownership of the vision, mission statement, guiding principles, positioning statements and goals. The administration takes ownership of the action plans and strategies. Where the Council and administration meet together is in the objectives—this is where the Council and the administration work together.

At this point, Mr. Holladay expressed his concerns about the media mix proposal. He said he was disappointed the Council was not brought into the proposal earlier at a stage when input could have been given. He said we didn’t know anything about it until the presentation. He went on to say we need a little more time to analyze this. We don’t want to be rushed into making a quick decision. We need time to look at it and consider other options. We need to have a committee of the Council review this again.

Mr. Webber said that he appreciated what the administration has done with this package. As concerning the Council’s role in this, we have been given so much that it needs to be reviewed. He said people are looking forward to a media plan being announced, but his recommendation is for further review and consideration.

Mr. Thompson said that if we delay doing anything, then when can we begin? He also mentioned the presentation was on PowerPoint and that Mr. Kilough had sent Council members a copy so they could review it. If we don’t agree to do this in this meeting, then when can we start something? In response, Mr. Holladay said that the Council could come back in May after reviewing the proposal.

Mr. Kilough said there is no need to rush. We are not asking for approval today. But to move *BT* to an objective without establishing the mix was also rushing. The administration had asked for time before a strategic issue became an objective. He asked the Council to take the proposal that was given, and discuss it completely, but to keep in mind that whatever the Council determines, there will be budgetary impacts.

Media operation manager Larry Salyer said that the presentation about the media mix was an obligation required by the Strategic Plan and that it only made sense to attach expense figures to it.

Mr. Kieffer said that it was interesting to see the administration's view that a 30-minute telecast is a viable thing. But this media mix is not using the current program. It seems like a new one. We are looking at a new in-house product. This is a major investment in a new product in that we are taking 38 percent of the advertising money for this project.

Mr. Webber mentioned that he was looking for a continuing discussion and not a conclusion. In looking at this proposal, it is a major matter that will absorb multiple manpower hours and be financed by the tithes and donations of our members. We need to take time to consider this proposal, but the last thing we want to do is to micromanage the administration.

Again, Mr. Kilough reiterated that the proposal was presented and that it should generate discussion. But it is a bit of micromanaging when various numbers are proposed for an increase to certain areas of the budget without in-depth discussion. He said that we have not yet started the media mix, but that we think it is a wiser use of our finances.

At this point, Mr. Pinelli said he had been listening to everything, and said that he appreciates the hard work the men have put into the TV program. In watching other TV evangelists of all kinds and of every style—they don't have it. What Mr. Kilough presented was a new possibility. He said that he felt very good about that possibility—it was something we could try. We had not heard of that concept before—it seems like a good balance as we touch every audience. He would like to see us at least try it.

Mr. Berendt mentioned that we need better interaction. He said that he had never seen the report from Canada, and he is from Canada. We need to be brothers and consider the feelings about someone who may be affected.

Mr. McNeely humorously commented that his wife appreciated the fact that the demographics of those who watched the *BT* program in Canada were women 65 and older. He said that much of what has been discussed in the proposal has been heard around this table over the years, and for the most part, they are good ideas. However, we need other eyes to look at the plan.

Toward the end of the discussion, Mr. Dick stated that he still has to bring the Council to the point of signing off on the Strategic Plan and budget. Even if the majority of the Council is unhappy with the media mix proposal, the GCE, in approving the Strategic Plan last year, gave the administration the responsibility of coming up with a plan. Mr. Kilough did what he was mandated to do.

Regarding bringing forward an objective to the Strategic Plan that would include *BT*, Bill Eddington proposed a new wording for a broader objective that would satisfy that proposal. The chairman asked that three members from the Council (Mr. Eddington, Mr. Holladay and Mr. McNeely) and three members from the administration (Mr. Kilough, Mr. Lovelady and Mr. Salyer) hammer out the proposal put forward by Mr. Eddington at a breakfast meeting, and bring back the result at tomorrow's meeting.

Roles and Rules Committee Business

After dinner, the Council reconvened for a rare evening session due to the volume of agenda items. Bill Eddington, chairman of the Roles and Rules Committee, led the Council through a variety of documents for Council approval.

The Council first was asked to correct an erroneous resolution previously passed relating to the membership of the Member Appeal Committee.

Next, the Council unanimously approved newly revised job assessment documents, similar to the president's, for the secretary and treasurer.

A procedure for placing items on the Council meeting agenda was next discussed. The committee produced a draft document that was reviewed by the Council and returned to Mr. Eddington to incorporate suggested edits.

An amendment to the "Outside Speaking Policy and Procedure" was referred to the Roles and Rules Committee by the Council at its December meeting. Discussion of this proposal did not take place, and it was postponed to the May meetings.

The committee proposed a substantial amendment to the "Procedure for Appeal of Suspension and Expulsion from General Conference of Elders." It was amended to cover appeals about disciplinary action besides suspension or expulsion. After much discussion, it was remanded to the committee for further consideration.

A new version of the Amendment Committee Scope and Responsibilities document was proposed by the Roles and Rules Committee. It had been reviewed and approved by the chairman of the Amendment Committee. After discussion, the Council unanimously approved the document and also approved the reappointment of two members to the Amendment Committee whose terms expire in June 2009.

Other Business

The Council unanimously approved a recent action taken by the Executive Committee to approve a technical issue regarding the employer-matching contributions for the 403b thrift plan.

John Foster
Council Reporter

-end-

© 2009 United Church of God, *an International Association*