

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Meeting Report
Afternoon of August 10, 2009—Cincinnati, Ohio

After lunch, the afternoon session is opened with prayer by Robert Berendt.

Committees

The Council balloted for the various members of the committees. The makeup of the committees will be published later in the week.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Aaron Dean, chairman of the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee (the Committee), addressed the issue of “Where Do We Go From Here?”, by distributing a document from the Committee. He said that no matter where we stand on the issue, we all want to do the work. He thanked Clyde Kilough, Jason Lovelady, Jim Franks and Doug Horchak for their suggested edits to the document.

The administration proposed a two-year pastoral training program at a central location. The first year of the program would be a biblical certificate program in conjunction with Ambassador Bible Center (ABC), and the second year would focus on specialized instruction in pastoral training. As an additional possibility, some regular ABC students who showed potential could be invited to participate in the second year of pastoral training.

The administration recommended three scenarios for the committee and the Council to consider, which are as follows:

1. Build an education/conference center and housing property in Denton, TX, (with the current home office to remain at its current location for the time being.)
2. Build an education/conference center and housing in the Milford, OH, area close to the home office.
3. Expand the current home office facilities and lease housing for those in the pastoral training program.

The Committee’s initial findings to the above executive summary are as follows:

1. That there be no new study on Home Office relocation. The location of the Home Office in Cincinnati has been determined by the General Conference of Elders, and no new study on this matter will be conducted unless authorized by the Council of Elders.

2. That there be no residential housing component for ABC (i.e., “on-campus housing”).
3. That a study be undertaken to determine:
 - a) whether the Home Office in its current size with a different configuration would provide adequate space for additional classrooms if needed;
 - b) whether an expanded Home Office (as originally envisioned) would provide adequate space for additional classrooms if needed;
 - c) or whether the Home Office, regardless of its configuration, cannot provide sufficient additional space for classrooms if needed.
4. If the study under No. 3 determines that the Home Office, regardless of configuration, cannot provide sufficient additional space for classrooms if needed, then adequate facilities at a location near the Home Office may be leased to begin the two-year pastoral training program should that be determined to be the best course of action for pastoral training.
5. If the study under No. 3 determines that the Home Office, regardless of configuration, cannot provide sufficient additional space for needed classrooms, that no capital expenditure be allocated for a training facility or housing for pastoral candidates (purchase of land, property, etc.) until the proposed two-year pastoral training program has been implemented and its effectiveness evaluated after a two- to three-year year period. If a capital expenditure is then authorized, the Denton property should not be used as a yardstick for the type of property needed in Cincinnati. In other words, any additional property needed in Cincinnati does not have to match the original requirements that led to purchase of the Denton property.
6. Although some pastoral trainees may need to take part in the ABC program, it shall remain a nine-month program. An additional year of education/training, if implemented, is part of the pastoral training program, not ABC, and is for pastoral candidates and the occasional ABC student who would be asked to participate in the second year of the program.
7. A task force be commissioned to develop a two-year curriculum with the first year for a biblical studies certificate and a possible second year for pastoral/ministerial studies certificate. The task force to include professionals and senior field ministers. The composition of the task force and its findings to be approved by the Council of Elders.
8. Since the Home Office location is Cincinnati and the Council is not authorizing any new study relative to the Home Office location, the property in Denton should now be considered part of the church’s unassigned reserves rather than a capital asset for development. The value of the Denton property is to be established by

listing the property for sale. Upon determination of current market value, the property will remain listed until an acceptable offer is made and the property is sold.

In addition to the eight parameters listed above, the Committee submitted the following recommendations for Council consideration.

1. An alternate mode of pastoral training be developed in addition to the centralized training program being implemented. The alternative will incorporate distance learning coupled with periodic on-site training modules. This option will provide opportunities for international elders unable to participate in the two-year centralized training program.
2. All training material either from the current six-week program or the new pastoral training program be made available to all elders in the form of recorded lectures and backup material on DVD/CDs.
3. The current six-week training program be limited only to new pastoral hires and selected international elders and then discontinued should a new two-year pastoral training program be implemented. For as long as the six-week program continues, instead of bringing in longtime pastors with 20 to 40 years of field experience for the six-week program, specialized training should be given to all elders (within language limitations) in areas such as:
 - a) meeting the need in cases where specific weaknesses have been identified;
 - b) specialized training in areas such as conflict resolution;
 - c) focused education in needed areas;
4. Although a one-to-one replacement ratio for retiring pastors is our goal, future financial trends, lack of suitable candidates and other factors may make it impossible to maintain this ratio over the next 10 to 15 years. The Council and administration should work together in developing a contingency plan for this eventuality.

Doug Horchak questioned the need for providing recorded lectures to all elders on DVDs or CDs. He said that Ministerial Services sees the ministerial training program specifically for the development of pastors, and some topics may not be generic to all elders. Aaron Dean responded that as time progresses, there may be a need to have a pastor over several churches with church elders taking on more responsibilities in their local areas. Victor Kubik commented that he does not take it that all of the material would have to be sent to all elders, yet be available upon request. Clyde Kilough said that it is important to reword this particular point if this will not include all the lectures. Robert Berendt also mentioned that the curriculum has not been established as yet either.

Aaron Dean then said that it also has to do with understanding what all the terms mean that Ministerial Services addressed in the original submission to the Council.

Continuing on, the committee's report stated that the present home office accommodation was designed on a 1960s and 1970s style that makes poor use of space, with large unoccupied common areas and large individual offices. For the foreseeable future, if more workspace is needed it may need to be reconfigured or remodeled to reflect a 21st century working model. The following immediate steps to rectify the situation were recommended by doing some or all of the following:

- Addressing the need for single occupancy large offices. There is a need for some people to have this style of accommodation, but some of those now in individual offices likely could work just as or more effectively in an open-plan environment.
- Bringing in a professional space planner to evaluate, recommend and report on current office layout and functions.
- Considering whether more personnel could work out of their homes and be readily available for regular or ad-hoc meetings at the Home Office. Some personnel already operate in this way.
- Considering dual-occupancy of some of the larger individual offices.
- Converting some of the larger individual offices into meeting rooms if needed.
- Analyzing the warehousing function to see if some off-site storage can be utilized to free up space for refitting and used for additional workspace and meeting rooms.

Further, and if circumstances warrant, after perhaps five years, consider building the southern two-story addition off the warehouse, and after a further period, perhaps another three years and if work volume has risen, consider building a single-story addition into the rear (western) lawn section.

Training Needs

Aaron Dean continued that the Committee is of the opinion that it is necessary to consider ABC, pastoral training and administration needs separately before a realistic and affordable plan for the future can be produced. None is necessarily inter-dependent and each could operate on a "stand-alone" basis if necessary.

Should the Council decide that student housing is advisable or necessary, an option might be to acquire an apartment building, located close to the home office, to serve as both an accommodation facility and training center.

Ministerial Training

The Committee asked how much consideration has been given to having potential hires, who are married and have families, take ABC lectures on-line or by DVD as opposed to onsite, and whether consideration has been given to conducting a concentrated ABC-based program during the summer months while ABC is in recess.

The main questions are as follows: (i) are we looking at an ongoing, annual training program involving only five or six men, (ii) is on-site, campus-style accommodation appropriate and/or necessary for such a small number, and (iii) is the multi-move model the optimum one for the Church's needs?

The report also stated that the Committee also considered the possibility of a longer ministerial training program and wondered what facilities and resources a two-year program would require. The Committee suggested that a fairly lengthy study would be necessary to test the viability of such a program.

Further, the Committee asked if any progress has been made with regard to a visa solution for foreign students not having a U.S. connection that would enable them to stay nine months at a stretch, other than hiring them so they could be on a "religious worker" visa. The Church's ability to train men for the international areas is at a standstill until a solution can be found to this problem.

Jim Franks said that more explanation is needed with regard to the multi-move model. He commented that there must be at least one move. Bill Eddington responded that (iii) should have been removed from this paper, because the issue was deleted in another part of this document.

Immersion Education

The Committee addressed the administration's immersion paper

The Committee believes that providing housing in an on-campus setting is only justifiable financially if it can be proven that a nine-month, residential ABC program will produce *lasting* character in the lives of the participants. Expert opinion has been offered that it takes a great deal longer than nine months before any such purpose is achieved. Whereas, the examples and comments quoted in the immersion paper seem to be based on multi-year college or university programs. The Committee suggested that validation of the premise, or at least informed opinion, might be obtained by interviewing experienced former Ambassador College instructors now with the Church.

The Committee stated that immersion for such a short time cannot be proven by any historical evidence to have a major influence on character. Character comes from the home, not nine months, or even four years, in college. Ministerial trainees are already converted and committed—character development is not one of the outcomes sought.

Jim Franks recommended that a financial study be performed to see if on-campus setting is financially justifiable. He stated that without a financial study this statement cannot be made. Paul Kieffer said that the statement was made with regard to a campus setting. He responded that most in this room attended Ambassador College and bonded with many people—some who took different paths from what we did. He said that, if this is done, we cannot know that we will produce lasting character, but we will be actually getting into the real estate business.

Clyde Kilough said that, even if the Council wanted to build a campus, by this statement, it could not be done because there is no proof that lasting character could be built. Darris McNeely responded that the real issue is developing ministerial candidates.

Jason Lovelady said that a cost-benefit analysis was recommended earlier to answer these questions. He said that cost alone is not the only thing that should be considered. Aaron Dean said that this will be clarified in the report.

Aaron Dean, with a question from Roy Holladay, stated that the Committee is at an evaluation stage. He said that there are more questions the Committee has to address. Robert Berendt said that the Committee needs to look into these further issues, but this has been going on for two years and it needs to be finalized and balloted upon by the Council. Victor Kubik mentioned that he would not want this to continue on through December before making a decision. Bill Eddington said that he would like to have the 8 points decided on at these meetings. Robin Webber stated that the Church is looking at the Council as leaders. He said that right now we are in a holding pattern because of this issue and there are other important issues which need to be addressed as well.

Jim Franks stated that his point is not to delay, but to make sure the document is correct. He recommended that the important points could be taken out and placed in a separate document and balloted upon. Chairman Holladay mentioned that pastoral training is very important to the Church, but there is a need for a renewed emphasis on preaching the gospel.

Bill Eddington recommended that the Committee reorder the points and restructure some of them as well. Paul Kieffer suggested that the point about ABC housing be reworked. Clyde Kilough recommended that it be a space-needs study, considering more options than what is currently in the document.

The discussion was tabled to allow for needed editing and restructuring of the key points. It would be brought back to the Council before the end of the meetings.

Committee Assignments

David Johnson stated that all committee assignments were approved. Robert Berendt is chosen as the chairman of the Doctrine Committee.

Curriculum Development

President Kilough mentioned that the curriculum for ABC has been around for 11 years and the curriculum has not changed in that time. The various issues to be discussed are:

- ABC
- Ministerial development
- Outcomes
- Communication
- Future growth

Clyde Kilough said that a two-tiered task force is being proposed – from those already working with ABC and an outside review group. The outside review group would perform an extensive review of such things as comparing these educational areas to other education programs. The aim is for the review to be completed by December.

Jim Franks said that there has never been an assessment of ABC. Bill Eddington referred to the timeline mentioned in the proposal and asked if it is realistic and what happens if that timeline is not met. It was acknowledged that it might be difficult to meet the deadline.

Aaron Dean recommended that some of the elders who are retiring could be brought in to teach classes.

Roy Holladay asked if the outside members of the task force were qualified to develop a curriculum for ministerial development. Clyde Kilough said that some of the names proposed would be able to provide that particular expertise.

Bill Eddington asked if those who continue on to the 2-year program would be aware of that when they were accepted to ABC. Jim Franks said that they would know that it was a possibility, but it might not be determined until after coming to ABC.

Bill Eddington also asked if the pastoral training and ABC classes would be taught simultaneously. Jim Franks stated that the ideal is to give the task force a clean slate to offer any and all ideas for the education programs. He commented that the ideal is to have the same training for all those in ABC and those who move on to the ministerial training program.

Scott Ashley asked that, if there are 40 students in the first year, approximately how many might be accepted to the second year–5, 10 or 15? Clyde Kilough said that generally speaking it would not be that many. He commented that each year the administration sees certain ones of interest for further training. David Johnson said that he envisions no more than four to five candidates.

Scott Ashley also asked what those students chosen for the second year would do with the three months off after the first nine-month course. Jim Franks stated that is an area the task force will have to address.

Aaron Dean asked if there would be the option of taking the online studies the first nine months and then coming to home office for the second year. Robert Berendt said that would be ideal for the international areas. Clyde Kilough stated that this would have to also be addressed.

The Council went into executive session to discuss those individuals who are being considered for this task force.

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Gerald Seelig
Council Reporter

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