



United Church of God *an International Association*

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Chairman

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Dear fellow elders and members,

The Council of Elders of the United Church of God meets at the home office from Feb. 22 to Feb. 26. Sunday is set apart for preliminary discussions with the administration, with Council committee meetings later in the day. Formal meetings commence on Monday of that week.

As these meetings approach, the word “*hope*” weighs heavily on my mind and heart. We are jolted and sobered by a whirl of ungodly tidings coming our way on a daily basis. We are besieged in our 24/7 world with news of roaring armaments pounding down on Ukrainian cities in winter’s cold, the horror inflicted upon innocents and on multiple continents of many faiths by Islamic terrorists, and the escalating freefall of biblically-based values and morality in western society. Increasingly, institutions and individuals are targeted for ridicule and financial ruin for standing up for such values, while an amoral wasteland steadily encroaches on the minds and hearts of the next generation.

This reality was brought home to my wife and me the other night as we conversed with two gentlemen (one from India and the other from Lebanon) behind the desk as we were checking into a hotel. One question led to another and soon we were immersed in conversation regarding world conditions. Before leaving for our room, the Lebanese gentleman simply stated, “God needs to return and take us out of this world.” Here we were, a microcosm of the human family, gathered around a hotel desk acknowledging the echo of Scripture’s pronouncement: “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:8). Indeed, a massive intervention is needed!

Fellow elders and members, what an incredible blessing—what *hope*—is ours, that we have been given a preview of why and how God is going to intervene to end this age of man. He is going to remove the culture of humanity that took root in Eden and set up a 1,000 year reign of peace under Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:4, Isaiah 2:1-4). We have been granted such *hope* now, a hope that moves beyond simple longing and sighing about world conditions or events in our personal lives. God’s Spirit is working with our hearts and guiding us to surrender now to the loving spiritual rule of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. We do this daily in faith, because we worship a *God of hope* (Romans 15:13). It is His Spirit residing in us that guides and empowers us to move beyond our personal doubts and despairs on a daily basis.

It’s with such *hope* we meet this coming week to seek God’s continuing guidance in effectively proclaiming the gospel (good news) message entrusted to our care. That *hope* encourages us that the Almighty is not finished with mankind, but ultimately will intervene in world affairs and offer humanity the opportunity to reconcile with Him. Amazing! One of the guiding principles of our Strategic Plan that helps us consider how to best utilize God’s holy tithes states: “Therefore it is the duty of the Church to proclaim a *message of hope* and a call to repentance, to teach all things Christ

has commanded and to prepare members of the Body of Christ to teach, lead and serve under him now and in the future” (emphasis added).

It’s with eagerness that we will discuss and look to this God of hope to open doors to increase our ability to extend this message, by the most effective means possible, to effectively impact minds and hearts that need this *hope* of a better future. It’s with such *hope* that we seek God’s guidance in training leaders to responsibly serve those He calls now, in a manner consistent with the loving and servant-oriented example of Jesus Christ, that we may truly be “helpers of your joy” (2 Corinthians 1:24).

It’s with such *hope* that we will extensively review and critique the Ambassador Bible College curriculum to ensure our young people are further enabled to understand the great truths of God. It’s imperative to create an educational environment that initiates and cultivates a spark of inquiry towards the Scriptures that mirrors the words of the poet Yeats: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” It’s only then that they will begin to be prepared and strengthened for their spiritual walk into the 21st century.

It’s with such hope that we will be planning the upcoming General Conference of Elders for May that will commemorate our 20th anniversary as an instrument within the Body of Christ. The focused theme is “*Labor in the Word*,” based on 1 Timothy 5:17. In a stress-filled world, with ever-increasing demands on our minds, time and energies, it’s essential that the ministry set aside even more time in personally exploring the depths of Scripture and allow God to speak to us through His Word before sharing it with others.

Let’s fully appreciate that it’s God’s Word and Spirit that binds us together. In one sense, God’s Word is our “bread and butter.” Christ made it plainer: “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). With so many responsibilities and demands upon our ministry, it’s essential to re-focus and make sure this remains a top priority to sustain our personal spiritual viability and to share His words more effectively with our members.

It’s with *hopeful* confidence that we will review names set before us regarding ministerial ordination. We maintain a confident *hope* that our Heavenly Father will continue to supply the needs of the Body of Christ in raising up servants who are not novices but known to “rightly divide the word of truth,” who have been proven to be bold yet humble; loving yet firm; decisive yet patient; and kind in their dealings with the flock of God. Approving ordinations is an important Council responsibility in “touching the future.” Ministers who reflect our Master give our fellow brethren *hope!*

The Council approaches these coming meetings with a sense of *faith, hope, and love* (1 Corinthians 13:13) that God will be in our midst, as we seek His ways and not lean unto our own understanding. Our true desire is to serve and please Him. It’s with the confidence that “the prayer of the righteous person avails much” and that many of you will be praying for God’s blessings to be upon us that we approach these upcoming meetings with *hope*. Please view the attachment that offers a general sense of the agenda for the meetings.

May the God of hope keep you and bless you,



Robin Webber