



United Church of God *an International Association*

Robin Webber
Chairman

Victor Kubik
President

April 27, 2015

Fellow ministers and dear brethren around the world,

I hope and trust that you had a spiritually rewarding experience in observing the Christian Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. The three elements that drew us together during the recent festival season were the common calling of our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God guiding us, and the Word of God (Ephesians 4:3-6, John 6:63).

This leads me to sharing the importance of the conference that takes place May 2-4 in Northern Kentucky at the Marriott Cincinnati Airport Hotel—which is about 25 miles from the home office. This will be the 20th anniversary of the formal beginning of the United Church of God, *an International Association*. In 1995 ministry and members alike were compelled by the guidance of God's Spirit to spiritually stand up and move forward in a new chapter of fellowship with people holding the same doctrines and desire to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God and follow the example of Jesus Christ in all things (Acts 28:31).

Twenty years ago, ministry and members bonded together in a deep desire to faithfully obey God's Word as revealed in Scripture. At that time looking to Jesus Christ as the living Head of His Church, we humbly sought that God might use us as He so chose. We prayed, hoped and fasted that He might guide and give us the ability to: 1) continue seventh-day Sabbath services overseen by pastors and elders, 2) prepare and sustain meeting sites for observing the annual biblical festivals mentioned throughout the Scriptures, 3) produce meaningful youth programs that would generate faithfulness to His Word to another generation, and 4) proclaim the good news of salvation and the coming Kingdom of God. Twenty years later by God's grace we continue to fulfill those desires around this world.

That's why every year we have the annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders to ensure that we are on course with that commitment that we made nearly a quarter of a century ago. This year's theme for the conference of "*Labor in the Word*" (1 Timothy 1:17) is extremely relevant when we consider the importance that we put on the Bible. We are indeed people of the Book! As Christians, God's Word plainly tells us that our ultimate nourishment is from *above*. The words of Christ say it all—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The Sabbath messages on May 2 from Victor Kubik, our president, and me will speak to this priority and need. Donald Ward's keynote presentation on Sunday to the assembled ministry is titled "*Labor in the Word*." Other sessions throughout the Sabbath and weekend will address this vital topic.

Beginning this coming Friday, May 1, we have a full day of meetings designed for all international ministry in attendance. We have congregations on all six inhabitable continents. As an international association, it's important to hear and address their specific needs.

We will again hold a question-and-answer period on Saturday evening in which GCE members can directly ask questions of the Council of Elders and administration regarding a range of issues, because once again, the GCE has vital oversight responsibilities. We strongly adhere to the safeguarding spiritual principle that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14).

Sunday’s GCE business meetings will focus on reports from me as chairman and from our president and our operation managers—as well as considering approval of the proposed Strategic Plan, Operation Plan and accompanying Budget for the fiscal year of 2015-2016. There will also be a ballot for approving the updated UCG Bylaws in the same manner that the Constitution was updated last year after nearly 20 years. Many of the proposed revisions are simply grammatical or making sure all statements throughout the document are in sync. Certain key items that demand more consideration will be balloted upon as separate amendments. We will also be selecting three domestic seats and one international spot for the Council of Elders.

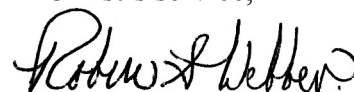
Sunday is a meaningful occasion to offer recognition and honor to those men and women who have been faithful servants in their labor of love towards God and His flock for over 50 years, as well as honor and remember those who have died in His service and in His care this past year. One of the key elements that draw people to this annual meeting (nearly 300 this year) is simply the desire to bond, enjoy fellowship and get to know one another better. Elders and wives who know one another can serve all of us more effectively.

The Council of Elders meets May 5-7 following the GCE conference. A special note to GCE members: Tuesday’s meetings are at the Marriott and will be open session until late in the afternoon. You are truly welcome to attend. The airport is right across the freeway from us. Please note the attached agenda. Major items during these three days will be the annual formal review of our president and secretary, and a review of our Facilities Policy in building or buying a facility for church services. We also have a number of ordinations to consider, which is always a serious but joyful process to experience.

The last 20 years have been a spiritually growing experience for all of us not merely in holding onto the truth, but allowing God to continue to mold and shape our hearts as He performs His work in us (Ephesians 2:10). We have experienced challenges along the way and doors opened to us that we could never imagine. That’s life—be it mountain-top experiences or deep valleys of personal and collective challenge. The best news of all is we are not alone! That’s why it’s important to read the Word, remain in the Word, and labor in the Word. As we do, perhaps it’s good to put a bookmark in Romans 8 and continually be reminded—“*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us*” (verse 31).

Therefore, let’s “be about our Father’s business” in doing our part in effectually praying that God will bless and direct the deliberations and decisions during these upcoming meetings. And let us always fervently beseech our God in prayer, “*Thy Kingdom come!*”

In Christ’s service,



Robin Webber