



United Church of God *an International Association*

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Dear fellow elders and members,

The Council of Elders of the United Church of God meets in Cincinnati from Aug. 10 through 13. Beforehand, Monday is set apart for Council committee meetings and discussions with the administration. Formal meetings commence on Tuesday.

As we gather to seek our Heavenly Father's blessing and guidance, the message of this instrument within the Body of Christ doesn't waver and echoes the original teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God means that we focus on their bold, loving and hope-filled words in allowing God to perform His spiritual work in us and toward others. Consider the following verses:

- "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).
- "Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).
- "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).
- "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (Acts 2:38-39).
- "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).
- "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).
- "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things, which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).
- "In this manner, therefore pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10).
- "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).
- "This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day" (John 6:39).
- "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).
- "Feed My lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep... Follow Me" (John 21:15-19).

It's with this scriptural foundation and framework that we meet in Cincinnati to humbly, wisely, lovingly and boldly "be about our Father's business," sharing the greatest news this world could possibly receive. Salvation is available. It's a gift from God. He has set in motion a means of spiritual return through Jesus Christ to that which was rejected at Eden and ever since.

God is going to intervene in human history once and for all and rescue humanity from itself. His Kingdom will be established here on Earth. Humanity is not consigned to doom, but ultimately in God's timing and way is offered a destiny to become immortal children in the spiritual family of God. This isn't the only day of salvation! God has a plan for all. Until then, God has made a promise to spiritually provide and care for those who have responded to His calling—now. You are not and will not be alone!

As the Council gathers together with the home office administration, this is our focus. How do we more effectively reach and share such good news and "say it like it is"? How do we declare what God wants us to proclaim to a world that's dying on the vine of human nature? How do we continue to share with our membership and a widening audience the cardinal truths and doctrines of Holy Scripture? How do we continue to effectively "disciple" (teach) our ministry, members, our young people, and prospective members? How do we begin training new individuals coming into the ministry, while at the same time reinvigorating senior ministers and utilizing their life-seasoned contributions to those just beginning this calling? How do we continue to reach out to our membership on every inhabitable continent and allow them to know there are like-minded believers and to encourage them that there's a common Heavenly Father looking over all His spiritual children?

These aren't necessarily new questions posed to you. I've mentioned them before. This is the field of issues ever before us to contemplate. It's the ongoing opportunities and challenges placed upon the Council and administration to seek and respond to God's grace-filled guidance that the United Church of God might remain a living tool and vibrant collective vessel in God's hands that remains relevant, reliable and ready to seek God's will wherever He leads us in Spirit and in truth. Please understand. Many programs to address these questions are already in place, but we constantly seek to improve them to glorify God and benefit you—our dear members.

Fellow ministers and members, we are small in number. We are but a speck of humanity in a globe saturated with 7.5 billion people. And yet we worship an incredible God, who is greater than the human eye or mind can imagine. We humbly but confidently follow in the same words and steps as the One who took the fish and loaves from the little boy and made that which was little into something great—that God might be glorified (John 6:5-14). We worship an awesome God. We have individually surrendered to Him who has freely given to us eternal truths that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). How incredible is that? How incredible are the truths and promises mentioned on the first page of this letter? Incredible!

I would simply sincerely ask you as one Christian to another that you will take time every day in the week ahead to ask God to bless the leadership of the United Church of God as we come together. We are but men, but God is God, and His purposes will be made manifest and stand. Whether it's truths revealed or teachings better understood, correction visited upon us, or feeding and tending the flock more effectively like the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ, may we be open, accepting and willing to His guidance. Please also view the included agenda for the upcoming meetings.

May the God of hope bless and keep you,



Robin Webber