



United Church of God *an International Association*

Robin Webber
Chairman

Victor Kubik
President

August 20, 2015

Dear fellow elders and members,

The meetings of the Council of Elders (CoE) of the United Church of God held in Cincinnati Aug. 10-13 are now over, and I'm pleased to bring you what I consider to be a positive report. It's important that we meet face to face due to the number of critical and exciting initiatives that are set before us by the administration to review and approve and that our processes are fully in order to prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. After this recent session, I believe "the dots are connected" more than ever between the CoE and the administration to move forward in tandem.

As you will read in the Council reporter's notes, we have been abundantly blessed by your faithful and generous donations to have ended the 2014-2015 fiscal year nearly \$2 million dollars over projected income. Additionally, the number of U.S. donors and coworkers who financially support God's efforts through the United Church of God now exceed the total number of UCG attendees. This allowed us to hire six ministerial trainees to enter the work of pastoral care; hold regional pastoral conferences to train our ministry; maintain a "cutting edge" vitality in pursuing new technological means to *spread our nets* as fishers of men in proclaiming the good news of God's coming Kingdom; and project to the world how we can imbibe and experience aspects of that Kingdom today in our personal lives. Another encouraging note is that the U.S. *Good News* magazine circulation is at its highest circulation since November 2013, and *United News* is at its highest circulation since August 2011. This doesn't happen in a vacuum. It takes a lot of planning, personal sacrifice and the hand of God to open such doors and keep them open.

Victor Kubik shared the news about the extensive evangelistic effort of public Bible lectures coming to Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio in October. It's called *America—the Time is Now!* All three of our *Beyond Today* presenters are involved. Mr. Kubik and Darris McNeely will visit the host congregations in September to help them prepare to do their part. This will be a whole Church effort!

As you read the Council reports, I hope you will be encouraged by noting the number of programs designed to train future servants in God's way of life so as to better serve you and those yet to follow God's way of life. The reports by Mr. Kubik and Roy Holladay focused on multiple programs to bring this about: 25 students attending the next session of Ambassador Bible College; the upcoming Pastoral Development Program for recent hires; the Labor Day Leadership Conference for local leaders in congregations; and the Labor in the Word program designed to improve the ministry's skills in understanding and effectively communicating the Bible to the brethren.

The Council approved ordinations of a number of men. It's always a humbling and wonderful process to be a part and see how God works in a multitude of counsel. What we do today and who we approve to be set apart before you as God's people affects you, your congregations, and the Church as a whole for many years. Please be assured of our seriousness and careful deliberation in this matter.

You will note that in John Elliott's Doctrine Committee report that the Council is moving toward creating a study paper on the subject of marriage. The world is being challenged on this issue as to who

and what constitutes a marriage. Today people who uphold biblical values regarding this sacred relationship between a man and a woman are being challenged and even threatened. Recently Mr. Kubik addressed this matter in a video, and the Council put forth a statement upholding the biblical model of marriage between a man and a woman. We now desire to proceed with a further defining paper that systematically explains the purpose of marriage, not only regarding the earthly component of who, but also what and why God designed this life-long covenant between a man and woman and what it ultimately portends with our spiritual understanding regarding Christ and the Church.

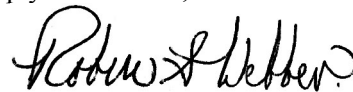
You will also read a considerable amount of comment in the reports about The Last Great Day/Eighth Day in regards to defining the time element of what is mentioned in John 7:37. I hope you will give it a careful read. Honesty is so incredibly important when addressing the Scriptures! We must be “loud” where God is “loud” and comment responsibly when not everything is clearly defined. Being honest with Scripture and the supporting extra-biblical evidence (or the lack of it) is a pathway to God’s blessings. It makes our reliance on His guidance greater, not less. The beautiful revelation of God’s overarching purpose involving this specific festival “to bring many children into glory”(New Living Translation) remains firmly intact. God has revealed a marvelous understanding. This is not the only day of salvation! God has a purpose and desire for every human being ever to draw breath (2 Peter 3:9).

The Council is scheduled to meet in December for five full days in Cincinnati. The first day will be a retreat session at a nearby site designed to focus on spiritual and biblical matters. God’s words in Scripture implore us to “grow in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18) and thus we look forward to gather as brothers in Christ and seek His guidance. Last year’s session that ultimately focused on “Labor in the Word” was beneficial, and we have built upon it since with specific programming as described above.

I conclude by thanking you for your personal part within this instrument of the Body of Christ. Not all the action is in the boardroom or the halls of the home office. As Shakespeare said, “The world is a stage,” and we all have a role in God’s story being played out here below. Each one of us, no matter how young or old, or what station of life we currently find ourselves, has been called “*to be about our Father’s business*” in our own unique way. If Jesus Christ is the Head of His Body then we in turn are His arms to reach out to others, His feet to carry out His care towards others, and His shoulders to bear one another’s burdens. It always heartens me to know that every day good things are happening in the United Church of God due to someone’s thoughtful service and personal sacrifice to those in need whether in our fellowship or without (Galatians 6:9-10). It’s always a joy to see and a marvel to behold.

Let’s now prepare to experience the full panoramic meaning of *each* of the upcoming Holy Days and the hope and joy they bring from God to us and portend for all who will eventually awaken to God’s great love for those made in His image and likeness. Let each of us yearn in prayerful expectation with the millennial exhortation of a faithful people, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

May our gracious Heavenly Father bless and keep you in Christ,



Robin Webber