



United Church of God *an International Association*

Robin Webber
Chairman

Victor Kubik
President

December 17, 2015

Dear fellow elders and members,

The Council of Elders (CoE) of the United Church of God met in Cincinnati from Dec. 6 through 10. Sunday was set apart for a full-day retreat for all 12 CoE members along with our president, Victor Kubik, at a nearby facility. It allowed us to focus solely on spiritual opportunities and challenges facing all of us today as Christians.

Much of the retreat's morning session focused on the incredible spiritual revelation and understanding that God has offered to us and the importance of maintaining our spiritual identity as people called out of this world and selected for a purpose beyond the times and distinct from the surrounding cultures, whether religious or secular. Jesus Christ stated, "I will build My Church," and that same Church called out by God (John 6:44) and headed by Christ (Colossians 1:18) is the "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). We must be ever vigilant "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Incredible truths locked into Scripture have been opened to those whom God calls His elect. Truths as to who and what God is about; who and what the Word who became Jesus of Nazareth is about; who and what is man; what is grace and the purpose for God's holy and righteous law; who and what is the Church; the reality that Christ is returning to earth to rescue humanity from itself; and the ultimate destiny of mankind to become immortal children in the spiritual family of God (Hebrews 2:10).

The retreat's afternoon session centered on the importance of speaking to relevant and personal issues of the day to our congregations in an increasingly immoral society that is permeating everything and even seeping into the lives of those called out of this age (Revelation 18:4). The CoE is supportive of the current public appearance campaigns, but we also want to make sure that our pastors know that they can prepare their own programs or seminars to address the public or our members on pertinent topics on family, child rearing and morality that frankly need to be addressed in an increasingly fragmented society that alters the ability of our families to properly function as God intends.

With this thought of morality in mind, the CoE approved a document titled "United Church of God Doctrinal Statement Defining the Biblical Marriage Relationship" to move forward to the General Conference of Elders in May of 2016 for their approval. Due to the current cultural assault on God's intention for marriage and the increasing general immorality of this age, the CoE feels it was important to build upon both president Kubik's and the CoE's separate statements from last summer after the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing homosexual marriage. At this time, the CoE believes the Church is best and adequately served by a doctrinal statement that needs two-thirds approval by the General Conference and not an addition to our Fundamental Beliefs. If approved, it will be a "Doctrinal Statement by the General Conference of Elders" that displays the endorsement of our ministry.

The December session begins our strategic planning for the upcoming 2016-2017 fiscal year. This began with a "clean bill of health" from our external auditor who annually shares his findings in person to the CoE. You will be able to view the report in the near future. Our internal systems are functioning and clearly transparent, and our financial reserves are sufficient. The CoE ran through a review of our goals, objectives and action plans with the administration. Once again, our proposed strategic planning and operational planning is geared to hire up to five or six qualified ministerial trainees.

Mr. Kubik asked Howard Marchbanks, financial advisor and Redlands, California, church member, to present an overview of planned giving and how it can benefit both the Church as a recipient as well as the donating individual and their loved ones by considering how to plan ahead and protect their financial interests.

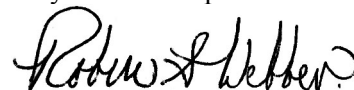
Mr. Kubik and the administration presented a full review of the current pressing needs of maintaining our 14-year-old facility, as well as sharing potential plans to expand the current size of the home office to enhance the effectiveness of our media presentations for preaching the gospel and preparing a people, and for creating additional space to become a ministerial training center for our international association. The administration will continue to prepare further presentations at this point. No determinations were made at these meetings. In speaking of our mission statement and training, I'm pleased to mention that we approved three additional gentlemen for ordination (one in an international area).

Charles Melear, GCE Planning Committee Task Force chair, discussed the survey results from the 2015 General Conference of Elders meeting. While the next conference is five months away, the planning begins now! After discussing several various themes, the CoE approved the theme for the 2016 GCE meeting to be "Live the Word." This theme builds upon last year's theme of "Labor in the Word." The GCE meeting weekend is set for May 14-16 due to the Days of Unleavened Bread being later this year and also Mother's Day on May 8.

The CoE also approved an amendment that is moving forward for the GCE's review in 2016 that is authored by Gerald Seelig (corporate secretary) and Chris Rowland (Ministerial and Member Services). It's titled "Majorities for Amending the Governing Documents" and impacts Section 5.1.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws section 7.6.1. The first part of 5.1.1 states: "All amendments must be approved by a two-thirds ballot of the GCE." The CoE reviewed this and by internal ballot stated its belief that this applies to all amendments including any amendment impacting the process regarding the Fundamentals of Belief. This is simply the process of approving all amendments except for those that affect the approval of Fundamental Beliefs. This proposed amendment maintains the very high threshold of three-quarters approval by all GCE members who ballot (whether in person, fax, e-mail or mail)—realizing there are some elders who may be infirmed or for one reason or another do not elect to perform their privilege. Be assured the Council maintains a vigilance towards truth and understanding, realizing this was fundamental for our coming together 20 years ago with the founding of the United Church of God.

Once again, on behalf of the entire CoE and administration, we thank you for your continued support and prayers for all of us, as we in turn do for you, as we all approach our Heavenly Father's throne through Jesus Christ. We are small, but God is great, and He has granted us not only the privilege of being called to personal salvation before Him through Christ, but He has brought us together as members of the Body of Christ at this time to preach, teach, and put on in full display the living message of Christ in us (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:12-17). It's a message of our belief that there is help for today and hope for tomorrow that moves beyond our human efforts, because we worship a loving God who will make up the difference just as much as Christ multiplied the fish and loaves so long ago when the little boy was brought to him. Let us move forward as a spiritual family in faith, humility, love and patience, always remembering that God's Spirit will never lead us to where His sustaining grace might not lift us up.

May the God of peace bless and keep you.



Robin Webber