



# United Church of God *an International Association*

Robin Webber  
Chairman

Victor Kubik  
President

May 13, 2015

Dear fellow elders and beloved members,

We have just concluded a spiritually rewarding experience as nearly 300 ministers and wives gathered in Northern Kentucky across the river from Cincinnati, Ohio, to attend the annual meeting of the General Conference of Elders (GCE). It was designed to commemorate the blessings of God's guidance in our first 20 years of collective effort in serving Him as the United Church of God. Many of you were connected via Internet over this special weekend. May I specifically say "thank you" to all who prayed that God might guide these specific proceedings regarding the GCE and the Council of Elders (CoE) meetings which followed. These formative years full of opportunity, challenge and lessons learned have brought us to a point in time in which we must now more than ever *look up and lean forward* in personally growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and "be about our Father's business" in preaching the gospel that offers help for today and hope for tomorrow—not only for ourselves, but all humanity.

It was no coincidence but every bit inspired from above that this conference's theme was titled "Labor in the Word." That's why we came together 20 years ago to honor the written Word of God (John 6:63) and to follow the living Word of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:1-5), wherever He might guide us as we yielded to the revelation bestowed upon us by God the Father's calling. This theme ran seamlessly from Sabbath morning till Monday afternoon. I spoke on "Panting for God" (Psalms 42:1-2), which focused on the need to make sure that drinking in of God's Word and connecting with our Maker remains a "24/7" priority. Victor Kubik, our president, spoke about "Laboring in the Word with Timothy," which addressed Paul's mentoring of Timothy in how to handle God's truths and maximize their impact, while at the same time not becoming distracted with unprofitable issues. The next day, Sunday, Donald Ward gave the keynote address on "The Trunk of the Tree," which defined the ageless questions of man that Scripture alone can answer.

This theme continued to build on Monday, as multiple presenters built on this foundation by sharing plenary sessions on topics such as "Be Prepared for the Next Emergency" by Rex Sexton, "Seven Key Tools of Bible Hermeneutics" by Mario Seiglie, "Context: Key to Right Understanding and Teaching" by Scott Ashley, "What's in Your Tool Box" by Larry Walker and "How to Labor in the Word Effectively, While Shouldering Multiple Responsibilities" by John Elliott. You can begin to sense the dynamic spiritual inertia and understanding shared during this weekend. In a sense, it's back to basics that "the Word of God is the foundation of knowledge." I was so pleased and noticed the measurable impact on my fellow ministers and their wives as we all heard the same sessions rather than being broken up into smaller groups. We *all* needed to hear these things together! We are all disciples. We are all people of the Book.

This annual conference also is a time to focus on the daily operation of the Church in fulfilling its Mission Statement "to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, make disciples in all nations, and care for those disciples." After fully reviewing the operational matters set before them as the oversight body of UCGIA, the GCE approved the Strategic Plan, the Operation Plan, the Budget

for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the revised Bylaws (edited and updated after 20 years), and all accompanying amendments. They also selected Scott Ashley and Mark Mickelson to return for another term on the Council and added Robert Dick and Tony Wasilkoff to this board of the Church.

During the following Council meetings from Tuesday through Thursday, the CoE held its annual formal review of the president. Five ordinations were approved. Mr. Kubik also shared an exciting development to immediately begin training six couples towards the ministry. They will be immersed in a focused training program in Cincinnati and then sent out to be mentored by an area pastor. These couples in their late 20s to early 40s have already set a positive example as young adults. They have already obtained some real life experience in gainful employment, marriage and service among the brethren. This is an important step forward for our Church as “we touch the future” by selecting younger people to serve the brethren in long-term service as they become *seasoned* servants to be “helpers of our member’s joy” (2 Corinthians 1:24, KJV).

Even as I speak of the *written* Word of God as the foundation of all knowledge, let’s also consider the foundation of the *living* Word of God personified in Jesus Christ as addressed in 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no other foundation can anyone lay that that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Because of His example, His sacrificial love and His deep concern for the flock of God, it’s He of whom our Heavenly Father has “put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). Our fellowship is not of men or about what men are doing, but what God the Father is performing through Jesus Christ in the hearts of men and women (Ephesians 2:10) surrendered to Them.

It’s with this reality in heart and mind that we now approach the Feast of Pentecost. It’s a day of promises fulfilled! It’s a day to reflect on Jesus’ words before departing, in which He stated: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16), “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18), “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, [it] will teach you all things, and bring to our remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). Starting in A.D. 31, 12 disciples who had previously run out on Christ when He needed them most were filled with the Spirit and courageously stood up and stood out as examples of transformed lives in full service to the mission of preaching and living “the Kingdom experience” even as they anticipated His glorious return to earth as promised.

It’s that same Spirit abiding and working in us today not only to “labor in the Word,” but that also enables the “Living Word of Christ” to dwell and work inside of us. It’s with confidence in this gift, that is the very essence of God the Father and Christ, that enables us to utter like the apostle Paul: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Why? Because of who we are? No! But because of this gift, promised so long ago, that enables the first fruits of God (James 1:18) to *look up* (Colossians 3:1-2) and *lean forward* to a future knowing that same Spirit convicts us of what Christ said and is recorded in the written Word: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

May God bless you with a meaningful and spiritually rewarding Feast of Pentecost!

In Christ’s service,



Robin Webber