

United Church of God, *an International Association*
Council of Elders Quarterly Meeting Report
Milford, Ohio

Monday, December 9, 2024

Chairman Tim Pebworth called the morning session to order at 9 a.m. Eastern. Paul Wasilkoff opened the meeting with a prayer. Eleven council members were present, and John Elliott joined via Zoom.

Mr. Pebworth began with a few personal opening comments. He then presented the August meeting minutes for approval, which were unanimously approved. He then reviewed the week's agenda, which was also unanimously approved. Mr. Pebworth then turned the floor over to Rick Shabi for the President's report.

President's Report: Rick Shabi

Mr. Shabi opened his report by sharing some personal thoughts and several scriptures that he felt perfectly framed his experiences over the last two years in his current position and what he will discuss in his presentation.

- Proverbs 27:23, "Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds."
- Proverbs 24:27, "Prepare your outside work... and afterward build your house."
- Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it..."
- Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might..."
- Ephesians 4:16, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."
- Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."
- Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..."

As Mr. Shabi read each scripture, he commented on the value these biblical principles bring to the Church and the time it takes to implement them as God desires. He said there is much to learn; even though we are a small Church we have a significant, worldwide work. He mentioned that he has learned much from the travels that he, Steve Myers, and Darris McNeely have made through the many different environments worldwide, seeing firsthand where the brethren live, their needs, strengths, and challenges.

Mr. Shabi mentioned that many things have already been accomplished, but in these travels, they have learned that there are many more areas of concern that we need to address. He noted that it's apparent that we are still learning, but we know that God will teach and guide us in how He wants this work done. He commented that the only way to know where God wants us to focus our efforts is to let Him lead. In return, we must keep that humble spirit, submit to His will, and always trust Him.

Mr. Shabi stated that God is providing opportunities for preaching the gospel in all nations more effectively now than what've done previously. He commented that they have witnessed what God

has supplied through many new tools, advancements in technology, and the eagerness of the membership to be involved. He added that making disciples is something that we need to focus on more; when everyone plays a part, we're doing God's work, not our own.

Mr. Shabi then discussed what has taken place since the last council meetings and provided a few statistics along with some personal thoughts on each item. He commented that if a question or comment arises at any point during the presentation, feel free to speak up.

- Ambassador Bible College (ABC)
 - 26th ABC Class
 - 32 Students
 - Youngest class so far (most under 20)
- Feast of Tabernacles
 - 13,592 in-person attendance (highest since pre-COVID-19)
 - Very positive experiences were reported
 - 69 total Festival sites worldwide
 - Between 500-700 Panama City Beach web connections
 - 215 Klamath Falls connections
 - 1,200 Sabbath webcast connections

New international Feast sites this year:

- Bangladesh: 35 in-person attendees
- Pakistan: 35 in-person attendees
- Myanmar: ? on number of attendees
- Burundi: 441 in-person attendees across five locations
- Madagascar: 58 in-person attendees
- Italy: 308 in-person attendees

Mr. Shabi noted that the Feast is a good indicator of the Church's spiritual condition. People attend; it's warm and friendly, and they embrace it. It indicates that the membership worldwide believe in God, believe that this is the true Church, support the work, and know the truth.

- Ministerial and Members Services
 - Four new Ministerial Trainees were hired.
 - Still have the budget to hire more trainees.
 - Visited all U.S. regions and many international regions.

Mr. Shabi commented that the fields are white for harvest, and we need more workers worldwide. If pastors have those who they can recommend, he encourages them to do so. He asked that we all pray about that because the need is great. There are people God is calling, and we need those who will serve them. He also noted that there will be a pastoral class for the new hires in Cincinnati in January.

- International

Mr. Shabi commented that the purpose of the travel over the last few months was not to see sights but to meet the people and assess the needs and conditions of the members worldwide. He noted that it was an eye-opening experience, changing his perspective on what can and needs to be done. He added that American-focused messages don't always work effectively in other parts of the world; we must learn their culture and understand their background if we are to serve them properly

and effectively. He emphasized that we need to be attuned to their specific needs, know how to best meet them, understand how they operate, and reach them with hope. The people need it, and God expects it to be addressed.

He stated that it's apparent that there are international areas we have not even tried to reach before. He explained that this doesn't mean God will call people in those areas, but we have the responsibility and duty to do so, and God has provided the resources necessary to preach the gospel. We plant and water. God provides the increase.

Mr. Shabi stated that what has been learned from their recent travels means nothing if we don't do something with it. He suggested that perhaps we could fund an Asian or African ABC, staffed with ABC alumni to provide the biblical education these countries are seeking. He reported that training programs modeled after what is done in the United States are scheduled for next year in Central and South America. He commented that some training programs have already occurred in Mexico City, with 85 in attendance. Later this month, a four-day workshop in Europe will take place. He also noted that the South African teen camp will start in a week or two with many young adults assisting as staff.

Regarding the international media updates, Mr. Shabi reported that the Hong Kong and Myanmar websites have been completed and are operational. You can find those websites (along with all others) on the home page of ucg.org.

- Marketing/Media/Public Proclamation

Mr. Shabi commented that it is a different world than it was 5-10 years ago. We tend to get set in our ways. However, technology is changing, and we must learn how to use and access it. He then stated that one of the things we must keep in mind is that what we do on the website and our publications are for the public—for the world. He stated that we must learn how this younger generation reaches out for information if we are to effectively provide what the world needs. He said that we have members in our congregations who have excellent technical skills and can help in many areas. We are developing networks of those who would like to help in various ways. He mentioned that three successful members in marketing, internet, SEO, and social media voluntarily came and gave a one-day seminar to the Home Office staff engaged in media. It was very professional and very energizing, and it helped us see where we can go when we learn and embrace each other. He reminded us of Ephesians 4:16 and how God provides all we need through the people He calls.

Mr. Shabi then discussed the new Reels (YouTube videos) and Shorts (Instagram videos) and their results. He noted that the numbers are good, but it has to be more than just getting the numbers. He asked, "How is it impacting those who watch them? What is driving them to our landing page? What do we give them that answers what they are looking for? What is the end result we hope to achieve, as God leads, with these?"

As this portion of the presentation concluded, Mr. Shabi asked, "Do we believe what we are doing – in what we are doing – in the Church – are we on the same page? If so, we would see God do what He wants with the work. When we are in unity with God, He will bless us. People can tell if we truly believe in our product. When they see what we believe, and know that we believe it, they will respond and seek what God wants of them.

- Website
 - After three years of hard work, the new UCG website is up and running. However, it has been met with challenges and questions.
 - This website will be dynamic, changing constantly to stay relevant to what's going on in the world and address what people are looking for.

Mr. Shabi then took a few minutes to talk about the Strategic Plan. He gave a few updates on the areas that highlight the direction the Church seeks to go under “Organizational Stewardship.” He gave a few personal comments on these areas we are working on. Knowledge, as Daniel wrote, is increasing. There is so much out there we need to be aware of. We need to know what is going on in our congregations. We need to understand what people are seeking on the website from the United States and international perspectives. We also need to learn how to engage various generational age groups. We have all those already in the Church. They can help us define and answer our questions concerning our age groups’ needs. What brought them here? How did they get here? Why are they staying? Not what we think, but through their eyes. He noted that we have already had a few of those focus groups. We need to ensure we are putting forth that effort to reach and engage their needs. We must make sure we have a resource out there where they can find the answers.

Mr. Shabi then opened the floor for any further questions and comments before turning the floor back over to Chairman Pebworth.

Chairman Pebworth then turned the floor over to the Operational Managers for their reports.

Operation Manager Reports:

Ministerial and Member Services (MMS)—Steve Myers

Mr. Myers began by quoting a scripture that he felt was the theme of his report: Psalm 126:3, “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.” He expressed that this passage beautifully captures the heart of our mission. He stated that we are instruments in God’s hands, and when we humbly submit to Him, trusting in His guidance, great things are possible.

He reported that significant progress and positive outcomes have been achieved due to the diligent effort of those involved. He noted that it’s clear that we are advancing toward fulfilling God’s vision for His Church, which fills us with confidence as we look forward to continued progress. Mr. Myers then highlighted several key aspects of the “Congregational Care” strategic directives that have been completed and those that are currently in progress.

Mr. Myers then took the time to acknowledge that while there are many positive outcomes to report, the journey hasn’t been without its difficulties and obstacles, which highlights the need to refine our approach and strengthen our resolve. He also stated that some progress is slow as many of the strategic directives we’ve implemented are part of a much larger, long-term vision. Many of which require continual refinement and attention. He mentioned that the work we’re doing today lays the foundation for outcomes that will extend beyond this year’s scope, and we’re also mindful of the larger, continuous work ahead, knowing that the journey is far from over.

Mr. Myers then presented an update on two directives from the Strategic Plan; develop additional parenting resources to assist in teaching our children and facilitate member education and spiritual growth by providing specialized educational materials. He reported that progress has been slow, but a capable team of volunteer educators in the Church is working on this. He then shared some of the focused efforts of the team:

- Develop lesson standards for ages 5-18.
- Curate materials we presently have, which helps identify needs and requires a review/edit process.
- Create new lessons, manuscripts, and imagery.
- Build PDFs and digital lessons.

Mr. Myers mentioned that although progress on the MMS strategic plan has been slower in some areas, many positive accomplishments have occurred. He then shared some of the key accomplishments so far:

- Feast of Tabernacles: attendance is up 6.6 percent over last year.
- More Festival sites: serving members better.
- Four new hires!
 - Carl Kinsella and his wife Kathy will serve alongside Mr. Rex Sexton as assistant pastor for Portland and The Dalles, OR, and will also support Mr. Ben Light and his congregations.
 - Jason Musgrove and his wife Tonya will serve in Cincinnati, OH, as a ministerial trainee.
 - Joe Neff and his wife Elizabeth will serve in Chewelah, Kennewick, and Spokane, WA, alongside Mr. Paul Moody as a ministerial trainee.
 - David Rains and his wife Kayla will serve in Murfreesboro and Nashville, TN, alongside Mr. Gary Petty as a ministerial trainee.
 - James Ginn will serve as Coordinator for Eastern Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltics.

Mr. Myers added that MMS hopes three more can be identified and hired within the year. He then presented some results of the directive of collaborating and developing educational sessions for the ministry internationally and in each U.S. region:

- Accomplishments in just one year:
 - U.S. Regional Conferences in all six regions
 - International Conferences in the Philippines, UK, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa

He then highlighted a few positive outcomes from regional and international conferences.

- Unity Across Borders - International visits strengthen unity by:
 - Breaking down cultural barriers and fostering deeper connections.
 - Emphasizing that the Church is one body.
 - Highlighting the shared spiritual goals/united in purpose/collective mission.
- Leadership Development
 - Held training classes to help develop local leaders.
 - Provided organizational and spiritual tools to equip leaders to be more effective.

- Encouraged and supported the preaching of the gospel in their areas (Not just home office/MMS effort).
- Since visiting the Philippines, a new trainee, Vincent Wong, was hired as a full-time ministerial trainee. Mr. Myers noted that this is the first new hire in the Philippines in 10 years!
- Strengthening Relationships
 - Face-to-face interactions deepen relationships and build trust.
 - Sharing information, goals and values helps different cultures connect better.
 - Promotes more cooperation.
- Discovered Local Needs and Challenges
 - Gained firsthand insight into challenges such as educational and spiritual deficiencies.
 - Engaged in Q&A sessions, not just lectures, to better understand local concerns and needs.
 - These visits help our responses to be more targeted and impactful.
- Sharing Resources
 - International visits facilitate the sharing of resources.
 - Support in areas like media, education, and leadership development.
 - Exported classes to Latin America to extend educational and training opportunities.
- After the recent Beyond Today personal appearance and the public Bible lectures in New Zealand, a new congregation has begun in Christchurch
- Social Media and Website Development
 - Encouraged social media and website development in their areas.
 - New websites in New Zealand/South Africa have raised awareness.
 - Social media in Latin America is making strides.

Mr. Myers then gave a few concluding comments about the international visits, stating these efforts have strengthened unity and can lead to long-term growth. He then took a few minutes to discuss the directive: Engage and promote spiritual growth and works of service in Young Adults.

- Established UYA landing page on the Website
 - Encouraging YA's to engage and sign up (1,500 subscribers).
 - Weekly emails to inform and encourage ongoing connection.
 - Curated materials and resources for spiritual growth and service.
 - Emphasis on service and volunteer opportunities within the Church.
 - Promoting events and fostering faith through service opportunities (Feast of Tabernacles emphasis).
- Challenger Camps and Materials
 - Refined Challenger Camp materials/applications/health forms/conditioning guide/program purpose and goals.
 - Building a solid foundation for future coordinators, directors, and participants.
- Young Adult Weekends
 - Developing a “playbook” or guide for hosting Young Adult weekends.

Mr. Myer's then shared the following Ministerial Statistics:

Deceased Elders:

- Ellis Stewart (East Texas)
- Dan Taylor (Odessa, Texas)

Deceased Wives of Elders:

- Holly Hannaway (wife of Gordon Hannaway, Tampa, FL)
- Sue Peine (widow of Tom Peine, Indianapolis, IN)

Ordinations:

- Jon Atkinson (Burlington, WA)
- Darren Henke (Burlington, WA)

Retirements:

- Roc Corbett (Tacoma, WA)

Baptisms:

- 161 so far in 2024 (62 new since the August meeting)

Mr. Myers ended by referencing the scripture he began his presentation with, Psalm 126:3. He then opened the floor for any questions or comments.

Treasurers Report—Barry Korthuis

Mr. Korthuis began his presentation by passing out the financial report. He then quoted from the treasurer's letter that was in the Strategic Plan. He commented that we all have a part; God works through that shared stewardship effort. He then gave an update on the strategic directives for which he was responsible: Capable Budgets, Maintaining Assets, Developing Backup Plans for Financial Services, and, in addition, being part of the team that put into place an Automated/Digitized U.S. Subsidy payment system. Mr. Korthuis then reviewed the financial report and concluded his presentation by saying, "We are doing great!" He then opened the floor for any questions and comments.

Media and Communications Services—Peter Eddington

Mr. Eddington began by passing out a Media and Communications Services report. He mentioned that any success is to be credited to God. Before presenting the report, he quoted Mark 16:15, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'"

He then presented the following results for the 2024-2025 Strategic Plan Accomplishments, Goals and Challenges:

- Complete website redesign, Drupal 10 upgrade, and implementation of new CiviCRM.
 - The final product launched two weeks ago (He noted that this is a work in progress).
 - The team is answering user questions and following up on bug reports.
- Record and publish one Ambassador Bible College class per semester on YouTube for membership.
 - Corinthians finished.
 - Daniel/Revelation is underway.

- Introduce the New Testament Bible Reading program with weekly online postings.
 - The Book of Acts should be out for review in December.
- Develop new ways of communicating with and preaching the truth to young adults (Instagram, Facebook, podcasts).
 - Aggressive social media plans continue.
- Update, refresh, and market *Beyond Today* TV streaming apps, adding subject categories and the most recent programming.
 - Under development now, with a new design being implemented using OTTera Inc.'s professional services (Developer of streaming apps).
 - The streaming apps will now be on every platform.
- Mine UCG.org data and provide dashboard analysis of UCG proclamation efforts and user journeys.
 - A full-time marketing employee at the home office would be advantageous in accomplishing this.
 - Various proclamation efforts need to funnel data into a common dashboard system.

Mr. Eddington then presented the update of the End-of-Year Social Media Report: 2024 Overview and 2025 Strategy, which Elizabeth Bissessar, the Social Media Manager, compiled:

- Short-Form Content
Over the last year, the Church has prioritized creating short videos under one minute long, linking them to sermon messages, Bible studies, and Ambassador Bible College classes.
- Consistent Posting
Maintaining a consistent posting schedule reinforced our connection with followers and kept the Church actively present on social media.
- Expanding Presence on Instagram and Pinterest
While Facebook remained our primary social media platform, 2024 marked significant growth on Instagram and Pinterest. These efforts broadened our outreach, ensuring content resonated with diverse audience segments.
- Strategic Advertising and Driving Traffic to UCG.org
Strategic advertising during key religious periods, such as Easter, Christmas, and God's Holy Days, enhanced our ability to connect with seekers of biblical truth. This strategy effectively drove traffic to UCG.org while offering meaningful resources.
- 2024 Social Media Reach Overview – To Date
 - *Beyond Today* (Outreach)
 - Facebook Total Reach: 1,227,266
 - Facebook Total Views: 1.87 million
 - Instagram Total Reach: 130,883
 - Instagram Total Views: 1.52 million
 - United Church of God (Connection/Community)
 - Facebook Total Reach: 171,873
 - Facebook Total Views: 1.72 million
 - Instagram Total Reach: 11,471
 - Instagram Total Views: 513,000

Mr. Eddington then shared the Plans for 2025 - Building on Growth Areas:

- **Strategic Landing Pages:** For *Beyond Today*, the focus will pivot to creating strategic landing pages tailored to key promotional periods like Easter, Christmas, and God's Holy Days. These pages will be crafted with specific personas in mind—such as Christian mothers, homeschoolers, and skeptical college students—ensuring the content directly addresses their unique needs.
- **Community Building:** For UCG, the focus in 2025 will be on further fostering a sense of community by embracing more interactive formats, such as experimenting with Facebook Live to engage directly with followers in real time. Additionally, there will be an intentional effort to share content, reports, and photos from international congregations, moving beyond a primarily U.S.-centric perspective to reflect the Church's global membership.

Mr. Eddington then shared the Social Media Metrics.

- Beyond Today on Facebook Sept. 1 – Nov. 30: 171,900 Views
- Beyond Today on Instagram Sept. 1 – Nov. 30: 9,201 Views
- United Church of God on Facebook Sept. 1 – Nov. 30: 388,200 Views
- United Church of God on Instagram Sept. 1 – Nov. 30: 37,633 Views

Mr. Eddington reported that on April 19 of this year, Media and Communications Services began airing *Beyond Today* television in U.S. prisons through the Edovo app. Edovo is a non-profit organization that provides educational, vocational, and rehabilitative curriculums and content to incarcerated people. A total of 1,110 correctional facilities are now carrying our content on the app, making its content available to 45% of those incarcerated. He stated that more than 900,000 learners view content on the Edovo platform daily, and more than 50 million hours of content has been viewed. Since April 19, our content has been watched in 983 different prisons, with 90,572 unique program starts and 61,143 unique program completions. Sixty-eight percent of the programs were viewed to the very end, which is a very good percentage.

Mr. Eddington then shared the YouTube Channel Statistics:

- Beyond Today TV YouTube channel received 3,957,734 views during the last 365 days. The channel has had an all-time 24.5 million video views, 87,250 subscribers, and hosts 1,635 videos and 311 shorts. The all-time views so far are 24,505,527.
- The Church's Sermon YouTube channel has had an all-time 1.88 million total video views, has 9,972 subscribers, and hosts 704 sermon videos and 291 sermon shorts. The channel received 664,310 views in the last 365 days.

Mr. Eddington reported that we are running monthly advertising campaigns on Roku devices with general advertising impressions by the thousand, or CPM. A variety of designs and program title graphics appear. The following are the Roku app advertising results for the past twelve months:

- 9.1 million advertising impressions.
- 48,498 advertising clicks.
- 36,404 channel installs.
- 85,433 unique viewers.

- 120,211 channel sessions.
- 39,832 videos watched.
- 63 average minutes on the channel last 12 months.
- Our cost per advertising impression is currently 1.5 cents.

As Mr. Eddington finished up his report, he shared the Church Media Growth and Statistics as of the end of November:

- *United News* circulation for July is now at 19,134. Approximately 48% of *United News* copies go to coworkers and other non-UCG readers.
- U.S. November-December *Beyond Today* magazine subscribers total 348,819.
- The total July-August *Beyond Today* magazine print run stands at 398,524.
- The December subscriber development letter from Rick Shabi is being mailed to 210,177 subscribers.
- The number of people on our U.S. database who say they are associated with UCGIA (members, youth and associated) stands at 11,994.
- The number of telephone and website responses from *Beyond Today* TV for 2023 was 10,587. For 2024 we are currently at 9,044. NOTE: We are only on The WORD Network now, having eliminated a dozen other broadcast stations from our budget.
- Total impressions to our Bing and Google ads as of November 2024 is 110.3 million. This increase is partly due to YouTube advertising of our video content through Google Adwords.
- Total literature conversions to our Bing and Google ads as of November 2024 is 120,386.
- Our November coworker count is at 6,448.
- Our donor list now includes 6,401 people.

Mr. Eddington then turned the floor back over to the Chairman.

Committee Chairmen Reports:

Doctrine Committee (DC)—Mario Seigle

Mr. Seigle reported that the DC has completed the following three projects that were remanded by the COE:

- The review of a submitted prophecy paper alleging that the two witnesses are actually only one witness. It was unanimously not approved by the Doctrine Committee. The result will be reported to the Council of Elders. A letter was sent to the author explaining the decision and its reasons.
- A review of a doctrinal paper alleging that, when on very rare occasions, Passover occurs on a Sabbath, instead of having the wave sheaf offering occur immediately afterward and therefore falling during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the author argues that the wave sheaf offering should be done on the following Sabbath, outside of the Days of Unleavened Bread period. The Doctrine Committee, after a careful review, unanimously did not support the author's explanation, so a letter was sent mentioning this decision and the reasons.
- The Doctrine Committee also reviewed a doctrinal paper alleging that tithing is not a binding law for Christians. After a careful review, the Doctrine Committee did not find the

arguments biblically convincing and unanimously rejected the paper. The Doctrine Committee prepared a letter, which is being sent to the author.

Mr. Seiglie then turned the floor over to Jorge de Campos to present some minor edits to the study paper, “The Hebrew Calendar,” Appendix, page 74. He explained why the edit was needed and presented the section that was edited. A few comments, questions, and suggestions were discussed. A motion was made to accept the changes, and the edits were unanimously approved.

Mr. Seiglie then reported that the DC has only two more projects on the docket. He turned the floor over to the chairman.

Members on the DC: Jorge de Campos, John Elliott, Mario Seiglie (chair) and Rex Sexton.

Roles and Rules Committee (RRC)—Dan Dowd

Mr. Dowd reported that they only have two items that will directly involve the Roles and Rules Committee in the upcoming council meetings and that neither of these items involved the Committee meeting before these meetings.

- Assessment of the Treasurer
- Repopulating the amendment Committee

He then stated that the other standing items before the Roles and Rules Committee—a review of Policies 4.4.3 and 1.7.6—have been discussed by the RRC and are ready to be brought before the COE.

Mr. Dowd mentioned that the RRC has some other items to work on and will start in January. Those items are:

- Review Point 12 in Elder Recommendation (4.5.1.1)
- Review policies pertaining to posting and removal of website content
- Propose updates to our Bylaws to reconcile all approved GCE and COE resolutions

Members on the RRC: Scott Ashley, Dan Dowd (chair), and Len Martin.

Media Committee (MC) — Paul Wasilkoff

Mr. Wasilkoff began by reporting that the MC has held three meetings since the August council meetings. The last meeting was to preview what would be presented during these December meetings.

Mr. Wasilkoff shared the scope of the MC’s first standing task as a committee to seek clarification on how to fulfill it. He stated that the administration offered their thoughts in a previous meeting, and the MC is now seeking the Council’s input. The Council then discussed this request, gave their thoughts on the current statement, and suggested possible ways to clarify. It was decided to discuss this further in an Executive Session.

Members on the Media (MC): Scott Ashley, Jorge de Campos, Len Martin, Victor Kubik, and Paul Wasilkoff (chair).

At 12 p.m. the Council took a break for lunch.

Chairman Pebworth called the Council to order at 1:00 p.m. and Aaron Dean Opened with prayer. He then introduced Michael Cullum and Brett Kohlmayer – partners at Clark Schaefer Hackett – to present the next item on the agenda, the Review of the 2023-2024 Audit.

After passing out the audit analysis, Mr. Cullum gave a brief introduction. He then presented the results of the 2023-2024 audit. He began by reporting that the audit resulted in an unqualified opinion, there were no significant deficiencies or weaknesses in internal controls, no audit adjustments, no disagreements with management, and no difficulties in performing the audit. He then reviewed the audit results document with the Council. Mr. Cullum then asked the Council if there were any questions or comments about the audit, changes in regulations in the coming years, and included some discussion regarding the ongoing risks surrounding cyber security.

Chairman Pebworth then introduced Dan Dowd for the following items on the agenda: Review of Policies 1.7.6—Admittance to the General Conference of Elders and 4.4.3—Sexual Misconduct Policy and related policies. Mr. Dowd began with Policy 1.7.6 and briefly explained why these need to be edited. He then presented the suggested edits and opened the floor for discussion. After addressing questions and comments, it was decided that the Policy be remanded back to the Roles and Rules Committee along with the suggestions for further edits.

Mr. Dowd then presented Policy 4.4.3—Sexual Misconduct Policy and Youth Protection Guidelines. He briefly explained why this was being brought to the Council before presenting the policy with the suggested edits. As he reviewed the document, Mr. Dowd opened the floor for questions, comments, and suggestions. After an in-depth discussion, it was determined that the policy be remanded back to the Roles and Rules Committee with the assistance of Legal and Human Resources to reevaluate the entire policy and address the concerns and suggestions that were brought forth.

Chairman Pebworth then introduced Charles Melear to present the next item on the agenda, GCE 2025 Planning. Mr. Melear began by passing out a handout of those elders who were present at the 1995 Indianapolis Conference. He then explained that 2025 is the 30th anniversary of UCG. The 25th anniversary was during COVID-19 and was not acknowledged. He then presented thoughts and ideas of possible plans to recognize this upcoming 30th anniversary. He then led a discussion about the history of the birth of the UCG meetings. He expressed his thoughts on why sharing the history and official narrative of those there would be exciting and informative for the elders who were not there to experience it. After an in-depth discussion, Charles requested additional funds to be added to the budget for the 30th anniversary plans. Chairman Martin suggested thinking about this overnight and discussing this in further detail tomorrow in the executive session.

At 3:15 p.m. the Council went into planned Executive Session.

At 6:02 p.m. the Council came out of Executive Session and adjourned for the day.

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Chairman Tim Pebworth called the morning session to order at 9 a.m. Eastern and the meeting was opened with prayer by Victor Kubik. There were eleven council members present. John Elliott joined via Zoom.

Mr. Pebworth then turned the floor over to Darris McNeely to present the first item on the day's agenda, the Strategic Planning and Finance Committee Report.

Strategic Planning and Finance Committee (SPFC)—Darris McNeely

Mr. McNeely stated that the Council had remanded one item to SPFC during the August meeting: a review of the Local Church Building Policy. Mr. McNeely reported that the SPFC held two meetings to discuss this item, in which they were able to complete a review and rebuild of the Local Church Building Policy. He also stated that this was done with the help of the treasurer, Barry Korthuis, and the Administration. Mr. McNeely then briefly reviewed what was being presented as the result of the review. He then presented the Policy to the Council. As the policy was reviewed, the floor was opened for any questions, comments, or suggestions.

Mr. McNeely also presented the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) analysis spreadsheet, which will be used in conjunction with the Building Policy. He then asked Barry Korthuis to briefly explain the purpose of the TCO spreadsheet. After further discussion, it was determined that the policy should be further edited based on the suggestions received. The SPFC will present the updated Policy on Thursday for the Council's approval.

Members of the SPFC: Scott Ashley, Aaron Dean, Len Martin, Darris McNeely (chair), and Victor Kubik

Ethics Committee—Rex Sexton

Mr. Sexton began by reading a section of the Ethics Committee's scope and responsibilities. He then stated that the Ethics Committee does not have anything on its docket at this time.

Members on the Ethics Committee: Aaron Dean, Dan Dowd, Mario Seiglie, and Rex Sexton (chair).

Chairman Pebworth then asked Dan Dowd to present and lead a discussion of the next items on the agenda: a Review Amendment Proposals for Bylaw 7.2.2, and sections 7.8.3, 7.8.3.1, 7.8.3.2, 7.8.3.3 Bylaw 7.8 Call and Notice, and Bylaw 8.4.2 - Qualifications for Council Members.

Mr. Dowd began by briefly explaining the purpose of the proposed amendments and the background of the process they had undertaken when they were submitted. He started with Bylaw 7.2.2. He then presented the submission and the Statement of Justification and reviewed the process that needs to take place at this point. He then opened the floor for any questions or comments. After further discussion and review, Aaron Dean moved that the Council support the amendment as written and that it be put forth on the GCE ballot. It was unanimously approved. It was determined that a statement from the Council would be crafted and reviewed on Thursday for approval.

Mr. Dowd then presented the next proposed amendment to Bylaw 8.4.2. He then read the proposed submission and the Statement of Justification and opened the floor for discussion. After further discussion and review, it was determined by the Council to put forth the amendment to the GCE ballot with a statement of concern. The statement of concern from the Council will be crafted and reviewed on Thursday for approval.

At 12 p.m. the Council took a break for lunch.

Chairman Pebworth called the Council to order at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Dan Dowd opened with prayer. He then introduced Jorge de Campos to present the next item on the agenda, an update on the Church in Angola. Mr. de Campos' report was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. de Campos began with a brief background and then gave an update on the strengths and opportunities of the Angolan church:

- Comply and preach according to UCGs Fundamental Beliefs.
- Observe all Holy Days and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.
- There is no legal or governmental objection to preaching the gospel.
- Availability of elders.
- Young Adult leaders who are capable of preaching the gospel in social networks, radio, studies, and other humanitarian works (three served in Brazil's Feast of Tabernacles).
- Clips/reels/shorts of sermons are getting many views.
- Pastoral visits have been very encouraging (Note the perception that they were alone).
- Grateful for the spiritual help in the form of the *Boa Nova* Magazine, booklets, and hymnals.
- Schools provide a good name in their communities.
- Good relationships with several city/provincial and governmental religious leaders – opened doors to preach the gospel (radio).

Mr. de Campos then spoke about some of the weaknesses and threats they are facing as well:

- Church legalization.
- Degree of spiritual depth. They're committed to truth, but biblical education is needed.
- Financial constraints and social-economic difficulties are affecting the preaching of the gospel.
- Unfinished halls – corrugated iron.
- The office is not functional as it is not furnished/equipped. Needed when the Church is registered for local governmental visits/inspections.
- Not able to preach the gospel via radio because of financial constraints.
- Land donated by the government in Luanda (Zango 3 district) is in danger of being lost (the government requires them to develop or lose the land).

Mr. de Campos then shared a few goals that the elders of Angola have:

- Implement online courses to teach sound doctrine.
- Welcome a UCG minister for the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Implement youth biblical studies.
- Implement national YA and ladies' meetings.
- Get the new office functional.

- Preach the gospel via radio nationwide.

Outcomes of the meeting with Rick Shabi:

- Monthly assistance to help them with ministerial transport expenses so that they can further preach the gospel and serve the brethren throughout Angola.
- Request budget to complete the furnishing of their office building in Vidrul, Luanda (Council approved in August 2024).
- Request budget to construct a wall around their property in the Viana area, Zango 3 district, Luanda (Council approved in August 2024).
- Request to construct a national church hall in the Viana area, Zango 3 district, Luanda. This project would be part of a request to Good Works.
- Request to purchase land near Huambo for their annual observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. This project would also be part of an additional request of Good Works.

Key items from the Angolan National meetings:

- Legalization process: 1,450 signatories so far; submitting in December to INAR.
- Ministerial visits are in progress.
- Zango 3 – walls and gates installed and septic tank installed.
- Plans are being drawn for a meeting hall in Zango 3.
- National Office: Funds received and materials purchased in December.
- Land purchase for the Feast of Tabernacles in Bailundo (Huambo Province) – Approved.
- Radio programs covering the nation via ten 30-minute broadcasts each in seven radio stations with 13 different ministers/members.

Mr. de Campos then opened the floor for questions and comments. After making a few personal comments, he turned the floor back over to the Chairman.

Chairman Pebworth introduced Mario Seiglie, Chair of the Doctrine Committee, to present the next item on the agenda: Fundamental Belief Amendment—Marriage. Mr. Seiglie then briefly explained the process outlined in Bylaw 9.1, the procedure for amending fundamental beliefs. He mentioned that the process had been followed and that the amendment had met the requirements to be presented to the Council. He then presented the proposed amendment. After thoroughly reading the proposed fundamental belief, Mr. Seiglie opened the floor for any questions, comments, and/or suggestions. After further discussion, Darris McNeely moved to support the fundamental belief and that it be presented to the GCE for balloting. The motion was unanimously approved. Chairman Pebworth then assigned Aaron Dean to draft a statement of support on behalf of the Council and then present it later for review and approval.

Chairman Pebworth requested Dan Dowd present a proposed amendment to Bylaw 8.9.3—Use of Committee Advisors. While Mr. Dowd prepared to present the amendment, Mr. Pebworth explained why he requested this proposal to be presented to the Council. Mr. Dowd then read the proposed amendment and opened the floor for questions or comments. After an in-depth discussion, it was determined that the amendment needed to be clarified and presented later in the week.

At 2:45 p.m. the Council went into planned Executive Session.

At 5:55 p.m. the Council came out of Executive Session and adjourned for the day.

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Chairman Tim Pebworth called the morning session to order at 9 a.m. Eastern and the meeting was opened with prayer by Dan Dowd. There were eleven council members present. John Elliott joined via Zoom.

The Council immediately went into a planned Executive session.

At 12 p.m. the Council took a break for lunch.

At 5:35 p.m. the Council took a break for dinner.

At 7:38 p.m. the Council came out of the Executive Session and adjourned for the day.

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Chairman Tim Pebworth called the morning session to order at 8:30 a.m. Eastern. Frank Dunkle opened the meeting with a prayer. Eleven council members were present, and John Elliott joined via Zoom.

The Council immediately went into the scheduled Executive Session.

At 11:15 a.m. the Executive Session ended.

Darris McNeely then presented the edited Local Church Building Policy. He briefly explained the policy changes and opened the floor for questions and comments. After a short discussion, additional edits were made. Len Martin then presented a proposed resolution for the policy. Aaron Dean moved to approve the policy and resolution. The policy was unanimously approved.

Dan Dowd then presented the Statement of Support for the proposed Amendment to our Fundamental Belief —Marriage. Aaron Dean then read the Statement of Support that will be put forth on the GCE ballot. Dan Dowd moved to accept the Statement of Support, which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Dowd then presented the Statement of Support for the proposed Amendment Proposals Bylaw 7.2.2, and sections 7.8.3, 7.8.3.1, 7.8.3.2, 7.8.3.3 Bylaw 7.8 Call and Notice that will be put forth on the GCE ballot. After further discussion and additional edits, Rex Sexton moved to accept the Statement of Support. The Statement of Support was unanimously approved.

Mr. Dowd then presented the Statement of Concern for the proposed amendment to Bylaw 8.4.2—Qualifications for Council Members that will be put on the GCE ballot. After further discussion and additional edits, it was determined that the Statement of Concern should be further discussed and completed via email.

Mr. Dowd then presented the Council's submission of the proposed amendment to Bylaw 8.9.3—Use of Committees and the Statement of Justification. After further discussion and edits, Tim Pebworth moved to accept the proposed amendment and Statement of Justification and put them on the GCE ballot. It was unanimously approved.

At 12:05 p.m. the Council adjourned the COE meetings.

-end-

Council Reporter

Ryan Hall

[These are not the official minutes from the council meeting. Elders can find those at the Home Office with the Council Secretary. Video recordings are posted for the elders on the UCG Ministerial Resource Site.]

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