



United Church of God *an International Association*

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Dear fellow elders and members,

The Council of Elders (CoE) of the United Church of God meets in Cincinnati from Feb. 29 to March 3. We are called together once again to ascertain and oversee how we might diligently fulfill the mission statement of the United Church of God “to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, make disciples in all nations, and care for those disciples.” As followers of the Son of God we are to humbly yet boldly follow in His footsteps when He said, “I must be about My Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). He went on to further say in John 9:4 “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.”

These two fundamental scriptures keep us in alignment with our purpose for meeting, and reminds all of us of the spiritual fervency needed now more than ever as we plainly see the ever-encroaching darkness of this age of man that confronts God’s desire for all humanity. What is “our Father’s business”? What has He granted us to understand by His grace? How does Scripture inform us what to believe and therefore what to do whether as members of a council or individual members within the Body of Christ? What spiritual principles guide the Council of Elders as we strive to determine with God’s guidance: 1) How to share precious spiritual truth and understanding both to the world and those in our midst, 2) How to best utilize the gifts and talents of the precious resource of our membership and ministry throughout the world, and 3) How to wisely utilize the faithful donations of our members and coworkers to this end to bear spiritual fruit?

Allow me to share the guiding principles from the 2015-2016 Strategic Plan approved by the General Conference of Elders last year that frames our decision making. Please carefully read every statement and word. I suggest it’s incredibly inspiring throughout to know what binds us in our common calling before our Heavenly Father. You will notice that it’s not simply religious concepts of what we *believe*, but it is followed with a *therefore* to motivate us towards action as we implore God to guide.

“We believe our Father has called us into a relationship with Him and one another through Jesus Christ. We believe the immutable Word of God shows how to build loving relationships (1 John 1:3) and to become more like Jesus Christ.

“Therefore we will strive to live by every Word of God, led by His Holy Spirit in humility, enabling these relationships to grow and flourish.

“We believe God the Father, through Jesus Christ, is building His Church, which is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, and we, also, as living stones are being built into a spiritual house (Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 1 Peter 2:5).

“Therefore as members of the household of God, we grow together into a holy temple for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

“We believe God’s plan of salvation includes every individual who yields to Him and Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:4). His plan includes the calling and perfecting of those who are being converted now as well as those to be converted in the ages to come.

“Therefore it is the duty of the Church to proclaim a message of hope and a call to repentance, to observe all things Christ has commanded, and to prepare members of the Body of Christ for service.

“We believe all humanity will ultimately have the opportunity to learn of Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection and the good news of the Kingdom of God. We believe the gospel provides every individual an opportunity to become part of God’s family (Acts 10:34-35).

“Therefore, in order to maximize the effectiveness of the gospel message, we endeavor to reach all people in a way that they can understand with a balanced mix of doctrine, prophecy and Christian living—recognizing that any lasting fruit is produced by the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

“We believe humanity is in urgent need of the gospel message in advance of the events surrounding Christ’s return. We believe Jesus commissioned His Church to declare what is to come, to warn of the consequences of sin, to preach repentance and to proclaim the hope of eternal salvation (Matthew 24:13-14, 21; 28:18-20).

“Therefore, we take very seriously the Church’s responsibility to boldly preach the gospel in this world to boldly preach the gospel to this world with a zeal and a sense of urgency (John 9:4).”

This is *“our Father’s business”* and what we will discuss in preparing Strategic and Operation Plans and Budget touching on all these spiritual needs for the GCE’s consideration in May. These guiding principles touch all that we will do and decide next week in regards to reviewing doctrines and teachings and wisely placing them under the light of Scripture; producing and promoting evangelistic tools such as the *Beyond Today* magazine and program, our Internet home page, and public appearance programs so that God’s ageless truths and values might become personally relevant to today’s audience; assuring that our congregations on all six inhabitable continents have pastoral care; and focusing on the needs of our youth to learn God’s ways and to create and maintain meaningful bonding programs for them that will stitch the Church together in the years to come. Please note the attached agenda for the upcoming meetings.

Next week, we look forward along with the home office employees to have a reception to honor Roy and Norma Holladay for their labor of love to all of us over the years. Roy continues to make progress from his recent stroke, and they are headed home to Tennessee to begin the next chapter of life together. Roy has served as a minister for over 50 years. He has served the United Church of God as president, chairman of the Council of Elders, and Ministerial and Member Services operation manager, and Norma has been with him every step of the way. What a privilege to share time with them!

As we move forward, I sincerely request your prayers that God’s abundant favor be *specifically* poured out on these upcoming meetings in this manner: Abundant in love towards Him, abundant in Christ-like love towards one another, abundant in humility that God and His Son alone might be glorified, abundant in discernment of God’s Holy Word before us, abundant in wisdom to discern what programs are needed to be a blessing to our membership, abundant in boldness that we step out in faith and not merely by sight, and abundant in God’s gracious miracle that He might take our “fish and loaves” of what is presented and multiply them many times over to His honor that all might know that He is God, there is none like Him, and “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)—His Son, Jesus Christ, the Living Head of the Church.

May the God of all hope bless and keep you,



Robin Webber