

# **United Church of God, *an International Association***

## **Council of Elders Quarterly Meeting**

### **Cincinnati, Ohio**

#### **Wednesday, February 27, 2013**

Chairman Robin Webber called the morning session to order, and after opening prayer, presented Council member Scott Ashley to address the subject of spiritual gifts in preparation for the GCE in May.

#### **Discussion of Spiritual Gifts in Preparation for the GCE—Scott Ashley**

Mr. Ashley said that he had heard only one sermon about spiritual gifts in all his years in the Church. He reflected that 13 years ago he had been a part of a committee to research what the Bible says about spiritual gifts. At that time he wrote the resulting study paper and distributed it to the Council for review. Reading from the paper, he cited the middle section of Article 3.2 of the UCG Constitution, which says of God that Father, “He has given us gifts that differ according to His will and has entrusted His Spirit to each of us that we might exercise those gifts with humility, gentleness and patience in submission, first to Jesus Christ, and then to one another.”

Darris McNeely reported on his Winter Family Weekend presentation about spiritual gifts. Some of his material came from a recent book on the subject, and he explained the difference between talents, skills and gifts. He sensed from giving the presentation that there was a definite interest for this subject among the brethren. Victor Kubik added that he found the presentation very balanced and that in our past the idea of “gifts” was thought of only as for the ministry.

Gary Antion asked if it will be presented to the GCE as doctrine when the paper itself says that we have never made a definitive decision about spiritual gifts. Mr. Ashley explained that for that reason it was important that the Council take this time in session to address this point. Mark Mickelson suggested that we don’t need a doctrinal review unless it’s something that we disagree on. This subject is biblical, but we simply haven’t systematically thought it through.

Mr. Ashley continued reading the study paper citing three key things we need to know about spiritual gifts:

- We are told to be knowledgeable of them (1 Corinthians 12:1).
- We are expected to use them (1 Timothy 1:6-7; 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6-7; 4:5).
- We are accountable for the use of our gifts as stewards (1 Peter 4:10; Matthew 25:14-30).

His paper then asked the question, “Why does God give spiritual gifts?”

- Spiritual gifts are given to prepare God’s people for service (Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12; 2:20).
- Spiritual gifts are given to build the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:10; Galatians 6:10).
- Spiritual gifts are given because God loves us (Matthew 7:9-11).

Several discussed when God begins to give spiritual gifts. Some said that it may well be prior to baptism (like Apollos in Acts 18, or our children), when God begins to work with a person. Roy Holladay pointed out that gifts can be enhanced physical skills at times to (as Bezalel in Exodus 35:30-31). Carmelo Anastasi pointed out that God gives gifts to people as part of His broader grace.

Mr. Ashley moved then to another point about to whom gifts are distributed. The paper comments about 1 Peter 4:10-11 that “ministry titles indicate general roles; spiritual gifts indicate specific functions...” The apostles took it for granted that spiritual gifts are spread widely throughout the Church (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12). Paul says to earnestly desire the best gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31). In essence, God gives His gifts to whom, how and when He chooses.

How we desire spiritual gifts was addressed by Mr. Mickelson, as he emphasized being balanced and humble in our approach. Mr. Anastasi commented no one should think of who has which gift and who doesn’t as some sort of competition, which it certainly is not.

Dr. Ward stated that spiritual gifts in Scripture are specifically supernatural gifts of God—as distinguished from the natural gifts God gives us through our family background or birth itself. They overlap somewhat and complement each other.

Mr. Antion said that every time it says “spiritual gifts,” it means God’s specific, supernatural gifts. He raised a key question: “Who determines who has which spiritual gifts?”

Mr. Ashley offered in response 1 Corinthians 12:31: “But I show you a better way,” which was genuine love. Mr. Kubik talked about how there is also structure in the Church, plus humility and service. Robin Webber commented that a gift given by God will be discernible in the person by others—if it divides people and especially the Body of Christ, then it is not of God—it has to build up and not divide people. Mr. Ashley also added from the study paper that it appears from Paul’s writings that when “gifts” were used for contention, God withdrew them.

Can gifts be developed? The parable of the talents shows that they can be increased, but never left unused, as indicated in Hebrew 5:12. How many in God’s Church in our time remain or remained as students when the Bible encouraged us to become teachers of God’s truth?

Identifying gifts (as with aptitudes) can take time and service to come to light. If we are hearers only, how will we know where we have been given gifts to serve? Sometimes there is overlap between spiritual gifts and commands. God is not so concerned about our being able to list our gifts, rather He want us to obey, love and serve Him most of all. All gifts must be bound to the fruit of the Spirit.

Bill Bradford questioned the emphasis on trying to “discover” our gifts as being a preoccupation. Dr. Ward added that spiritual gifts are something that God specifically gives for the service of edifying—building up the Church.

Mr. Webber then asked Mr. Ashley to wrap up the discussion with regards to planning for the GCE. He cited 12 summary points at the end of the paper.

1. We are not placed in the Body of Christ randomly or by chance (1 Corinthians 12:18).
2. Remember that the purpose of our gift(s) is to strengthen and build up the body (1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:16).
3. Though we are all in the same body, we all have different functions and gifts according to the grace given to us (Romans 12:5-8).
4. Spiritual gifts are not the same as talents.
5. We are expected to stir up the gifts that are in us—both the gift of God’s Holy Spirit as well as individual spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 12: 6-8).
6. Recognize, appreciate and encourage the use of others’ spiritual gifts (Hebrews 10:24; 1 Peter 4:10).
7. Exercise godly humility as we use our gifts (Romans 15:1).
8. The overriding motivation for the use of all gifts and talents whether spiritual or physical should always be love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).
9. God sets a very high standard (Romans 15:1-3).
10. While efforts should be made to confirm the best fit for members’ gifts, considering their interests and abilities, the fundamental needs of the Body as a whole are most important.
11. The primary role of the ministry is to prepare the Body for works of service and to build and bring unity to the Body (Revelation 20:4, 6).
12. As we all work together to learn where God has placed us in His Body, we must pray for guidance as we come to understand and appreciate one another.

Mr. Antion commented on an additional statement for the paper: “Whoever receives spiritual gifts is God’s decision, but the thrust of this article is to emphasize how church members are able to benefit the Church.” Mr. Mickelson suggested that more time for discussion is needed on this topic.

### **Final Preparations for the GCE—Peter Eddington**

During this segment Mr. Eddington reviewed the GCE weekend schedule from a handout. When he concluded, the Council entered executive session to discuss and plan the list of speakers for the GCE weekend.

## **Question-and-Answer Meeting With ABC Students and Home Office Employees**

After the lunch break the Council held a meeting with the home office employees and ABC students, at which time Mr. Webber read the new letter from the president on behalf of Dennis Luker, who was in the hospital undergoing tests for a serious health concern. This was the letter in which Mr. Luker informed the Council that he is happy to have served as president of UCG for the past three years, but due to his worsening health condition he has asked the Council to not consider him to serve as president for another term of office.

A few questions were asked, but all were very concerned for Mr. Luker health. Mr. Webber outlined for everyone exactly how United's systematic process for selecting a new president takes place, thus reassuring the students who were unfamiliar with the process that this is not a crisis for us, but in fact a thoughtful and prayerful routine.

## **Roles and Rules Committee Business—Gary Antion**

When the Council reconvened for their regular afternoon session Mr. Webber gave Gary Antion, Chairman of the Roles and Rules Committee, the floor to lead a discussion about changing the Council of Elders nomination process to something similar to what it was originally. As Mr. Antion read the letter introducing the proposal, the Council helped polish the wording. The reason for proposing a change was due to the current process producing an insufficient number of Council nominees. The proposal passed 10 to 2.

Mr. Antion reported that he had e-mailed former Council member Bill Eddington (who continues to consult for Roles and Rules Committee processes) about Mr. Luker's withdrawal from being considered for another presidential term. That was so Mr. Eddington could produce the assessment questions for new presidential nominees.

Mr. Antion then asked Committee member Roc Corbett to present two proposed amendments for Article 3.1 of the Constitution (about the "Purpose for the Church"). One was submitted by Vince Szymkowiak and the other by the Council. There was hesitance to approve either as currently written. Consensus was that the Council should table the discussion while the wording was revised and then renew discussion and consideration later in this meeting.

Mr. Antion next introduced Dan Dowd, who is the chairman of the GCE Responsibilities Advisory Committee (GRAC) to conduct the presentation and discussion. The Committee serves only as an advisory committee and has found three recommendations for the Council to consider.

The Advisory Committee recommended processes regarding Bylaws Articles 7.2.1, 7.9.2, 7.9.2.1 which pertain to the calling of special meetings. Each of these would provide a specific process for the GCE to fulfill functions designated in the governing documents as their responsibility.

Darris McNeely expressed concern about generating processes that could have potentially negative, unintended consequences. A discussion ensued that emphasized the point that the Secretary and Chairman of the Council of Elders are also the Secretary and Chairman of the GCE. Secretary Seelig then reread the pertinent Bylaw that already requires the Chairman to be part of the process of written notice of all meetings.

After discussion the consensus was that proposals for 7.9.2 and 7.9.2.1 (which provide the process for adding an item to a meeting agenda) with certain wording changes could go forward for the Roles and Rules Committee to recommend to the Council.

Committee chairman Gary Antion clarified the recommendation of the GRAC and put the official proposal up for discussion. Legal counsel recommended tabling the item until the next morning for the final ballot. The Council agreed.

The Council then returned to the discussion of the proposed amendments to the Constitution that would define the “Purpose for the Church.” They considered wording refinements by Don Ward and Robin Webber. Both versions were finally set aside for decisions the following morning.

At approximately 4:00 p.m. the Council entered executive session for the remainder of the evening.

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Randy Stiver  
*Council Reporter*

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