

I am not a lifelong member of the Church of God, having been associated with you for about 18 years beginning at about age 48. Yet I have always felt that I had full love, support, and encouragement from the COG members and pastors. I thank you very much for this; it has made my service to God and this Conference these past four years, much easier.

--Rob Helenburg

PRAYERS AND PRAISES
Chairman's Address to the Delegates to the General Conference
July 9, 2009

The Board of Directors and I would like to welcome you to the 89th meeting of the General Conference held here in Oregon, Illinois. We hope that you will enjoy the Conference and for those that attended OBC, that you have pleasant memories of your time here.

I am proud to have been able to serve you these past four years and to have served during this period of growth and transition. We have been able to make some changes in our methods of communication by taking advantage of new technologies, without throwing away the old. My desire was to see the General Conference do a better job of getting information to those of us out there in "Church of God Land". I think we have made some improvement in that regard.

In my local church in Virginia we, as I am sure many of you also do, have a session of Prayers and Praises during the Sunday Service to celebrate the good things that have happened and ask for assistance and intercession for the trials that we face. I would like to use that theme here today.

1. ABC & ABC-KE Campuses

We offer praises for the successful completion of the facilities for the two new campuses located in McDonough and Duluth, GA. This will give the College the ability to better serve their customers who are the students that wish to grow and learn the Word of God and about his promised Kingdom which is coming. The McDonough Offices located in Avalon Business Park house the Church of God business offices and classroom facilities for many American, local and out of state, and some international students. The facilities at the Northeast campus in Duluth, has been approved for occupancy and provides a church sanctuary, offices for the Korean Extension and the Korean Conference of Churches and most importantly classroom and library facilities for the Korean International students.

But full use of these facilities requires approval by the INS. We need prayers for a timely and speedy review and inspection of these facilities by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service in order to put the facilities into use. Tim, David, Steve and Sam along

with the Board have worked diligently to put into place the plan to best accomplish this goal. We have even delayed the start of the coming school year to allow more opportunity to allow the inspections to be completed. Now we need to “Storm the Gates” with prayer that the INS powers that be will do their job in a timely manner.

2. Church Stability

The entire country and our own members, churches and conferences are feeling the effects of the recession and the tough economic times. We offer praises to God that our churches and conferences are continuing to accomplish their missions and programs. Our youth programs are still in place at the regional and national levels and that Church giving has not sharply fallen off. We pray that it will continue to be so.

3. International Missions Growth

We give praise the fact that our evangelism and missions outreach continues to grow and to overcome diversities. We lost Pastor Bader in Peru, but the church he started is continuing on and even experiencing growth. The efforts in Haiti are providing help and support in one of the poorest areas in the world. Our members there are better off than many of their fellow countrymen. The African churches and Conferences are growing and are now larger than the parent Church of God organization. We have over 200 churches combined into two conferences, located in three countries, that includes Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania with the possibility of new churches in Kenya, which may grow from our ABC international students. Other venues such as Mexico, Philippines, and Russia continue to thrive and grow. The Korean Conference under Steve An continues to grow with two churches in Korea as well as two in the United States.

Very recently we have learned that there is an inquiry by a collection of existing churches in Pakistan, who are interested in investigating the possibility of joining the Church of God, as we best represent their belief structure, which is influenced by the Moslem beliefs of Unitarianism. We seem to best fit in with their doctrine. Within this next year there may be a Pakistani Conference. We pray for a continuing development and future alliance with those believers.

4. Real Time Distance Learning

One year ago Jeff Fletcher asked us to imagine ABC classes taught to students located all around the US by Dr Joe or classes taught to students in Korean by Steve An all while in the classroom in GA. We do not have that technology in place as yet, but the classrooms at Avalon and Duluth have been constructed with the basics required so they are ready to be outfitted to accept the technology. We praise God that we have within the COG family, individuals with the technical knowledge needed to bring this remote teaching to fruition. Currently there are two approaches each of which have distinct advantages. Jason Railton and Lee McMinn have the expertise to guide us in our approach to these new technologies and I personally hope that we will have something in place at our campuses by the time we meet again in 2010.

5. Communications

One of the greatest problems that any organization must deal with is communications, both internal and external. This past year the Board and Staff have worked and at times struggled with these issues. We offer praises that we made contact with a management consultant that specializes in helping faith based organizations such as the Church of God. She showed us the need for the Board to have an organized and integrated approach to the standing documents, policies, protocols, committees and so forth, that govern the actions of the BOD. These Governance Documents are vital to consistent management and for the orderly transition between each new yearly Board makeup as the individual members change. I praise God that we were able to accomplish this in the past year. Also this year, the Board undertook the project of developing detailed strategic plans to guide us and the staff in reaching the goals stated in the ABC and MSN Vision Statements. This project helps greatly to communicate and clarify the Board's plan to the Staff and the Staff's ability to respond. These plans should be completed and underway by this fall.

As we are moving to a college structure that encompasses two separate campuses occupied by two different cultures, we are discovering areas that need clarification and the need for better internal communications. The Church of God has functioned, since our very beginning, in an environment where everyone is "just down the hall" and coordination was relatively easy. But with separation, both physically and culturally we have learned that misunderstandings can occur and feelings can be hurt and suspicions can develop. This spring the Board and Staff have worked together to attempt to resolve these communications issues so as to keep us strong and focused on God's business of educating our students to be the future leaders in our churches and conferences. We praise God that we are making positive progress in resolving these vital issues.

Finally, we have started to find ways to use the technology available to better reach the members out there in "Church of God Land". For those more comfortable with the internet, you now have the option of receiving the Restitution Herald-Progress Journal by computer rather than in paper form. For those not so inclined, the standard paper mail-out document is and will remain available. We have started a Progress Journal "Lite", an e-mail version that can provide more topical, newsy materials in a more current monthly format. In the past sometimes the items reported were dated by the time the printed Restitution Herald-Progress Journal was distributed. This e-mail publication can allow us to provide to you, time sensitive materials while they are relevant. We praise God that we can find ways to use these things for His service and ask for your prayers that we can continue to improve our communications at all levels.

In summary, I would like to thank the other Board Members, the College and Conference Staff for their support to me and to each other and for their dedication the General Conference. I also thank the Pastors and especially to the members of the General Conference for their interest and support. I would like to thank the Delegates of the Church of God that elected me

four years ago and who never failed to support me with their prayers. All these individual members are our constituency and they are who this is all about. Without the support and cooperation of the individual Church of God members, our efforts are in vain. I praise God for the strength He has given me this year and for the support I have received and I pray that He continues to give strength to this Conference and to the new Board, so that we can continue His work. Again, thank you all very much for your love and support these past years.