



United Church of God *an International Association*

Melvin Rhodes
Chairman

Dennis Luker
President

Background to the Situation with Leon Walker and Latin America

July 1, 2010

This document is rather lengthy. However, we think the documentation provided herein is necessary to provide the needed background to understand what led up to the decision to remove Leon Walker. For reasons that will be explained later, we have said little to date about this. However, since so many false rumors and allegations have been spread accusing the leadership of the United Church of God, *an International Association* (“Church” or “UCGIA”) of unethical and unjust actions, we are compelled to set the record straight to protect the Church from those who are spreading defamation and causing confusion and division.

On June 23 we announced that Mr. Walker was being replaced in his duties relative to the Latin American region of the United Church of God. We placed the following message on the *Inside United: Realtime* blog (<http://realtimeunited.wordpress.com>) to update members immediately as to this development:

Changes in Latin American Regional Administration

We are very sorry to have to make the following announcement. With the authorization of the Council of Elders, Leon Walker is being replaced in his administrative and pastoral duties associated with the Church’s activities in the Latin American region.

Last week, Mr. Walker was requested to come to the home office for a meeting with the interim president and with the chairman of the Council ethics committee (who is also the Ministerial Services operation manager), to discuss certain e-mail communications between him and the Spanish-speaking ministers he oversees. Mr. Walker chose not to attend and instead left on a three-week trip to Latin America.

On June 20, Mr. Walker was directed to discontinue his trip and return to the home office in Cincinnati to review and respond to this information with the interim president and ethics committee chairman and members of the Council of Elders. The Council had directed me as interim president of the Church and chairman of the Council to seek resolution of these issues in the planned meetings.

On June 21, Mr. Walker replied stating that he refused to travel to the Church’s home office for the purpose of participating in these meetings. He was subsequently relieved of his duties. At this time, Mr. Walker remains an employee of the Church and, given his change in responsibilities, has been directed to return for review of his duties.

A new regional coordinator for the work of the Church in Latin American areas will be named shortly. Mario Seiglie, who served our brethren in Latin America for two decades

and who now will shortly begin service on the Council of Elders, will be traveling to the Latin American region to meet with our ministers and members there.

It remains my fervent hope that we can all remember that “God has called us to peace” (1 Corinthians 7:15) and as recorded in 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (New International Version).

Your continued prayers for true unity and peace are much appreciated.

Roy Holladay, Interim President and Chairman

We chose at that time not to give details as to the reasons for why Mr. Walker had been ordered to come to the home office to meet with the President and Council and to cancel his (then) upcoming trip to Latin America—the refusal of which resulted in Mr. Walker’s removal. We did not disclose details in the hope that he would recognize and acknowledge his wrongdoing and that we might continue in a productive relationship with him.

We subsequently learned that, by the time of our announcement, Mr. Walker had in fact *already* sent a letter in Spanish the previous day to Spanish-speaking ministers and brethren rejecting his removal and the authority of the president or Council of Elders over him. The relevant portions of his letter, translated into English, are as follows:

Greetings to all,

I would like to inform all of you about some recent events in the Church. The Council of Elders and/or the President have decided to remove me as Regional Director of the Spanish Area . . .

I want to be perfectly clear that I do not accept being removed as Regional Director. I also do not accept as legitimate the reasons that have been given for my removal. Therefore, I believe that the correct thing to do is to communicate with you the reasons why this has happened so you will not be confused or misinformed about the situation.

Today, June 22, I received a letter from Mr. Holladay removing me from being the Regional Director of the Spanish area. Notwithstanding, the Latin ministry and I do not accept such a decision. I will continue to serve the Church in the Latin American area as Regional Director, whether I’m employed or not by the United Church of God, *an International Association*. The ministry backs me in this and we are unified in this decision to reject such an unjust decision.

I want to emphasize that I am not leaving the United Church of God, even though I’m aware that I could be expelled. Yet, even if I am expelled, I am not resigning. Neither have the ministers and congregations in Latin America abandoned the United Church of God. Each country is legally constituted as a local entity and we shall remain as such. We are not going to join any other group, and we are not going to change who or what we are.

We shall continue with the same doctrines that we have always taught. We shall continue with the same pastors, local elders and deacons. We will continue with the same administration. We will remain with the same Regional Director. Absolutely nothing has changed about the local congregations. The unjust decisions taken by 8 or 9 men will not affect our congregations or our daily lives.

Of course, we understand that the financial subsidies we receive from the Home Office will be cut. That means there are some things that we will not be able to continue doing—such as publishing a magazine and other literature. But, we trust God will take care of us.

To conclude, we are united. We will remain united. We are not going to permit adversity to divide us. If you have any questions, doubts or concerns about the current situation, please go to your pastor about it. He is willing to answer all your questions. If there is something you don't understand, they can answer you, or they will contact me and we will be sure to have those questions answered. . . .

Affectionately,
(Leon Walker)

We'll discuss this letter's disingenuousness and the excuses given for this defiant behavior later in this paper. The language of his letter sadly calls to mind the words of Psalm 55:21: "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." While these words may sound like honey, the actions reveal a different story. Nothing said here justifies fomenting rebellion and division within the Church of God. (We might also note that there are many who would dispute the truthfulness of other portions of Mr. Walker's June 22 letter, though in the interest of space we will address only the key points pertinent to the actions we have taken.)

We are deeply disappointed to see from his letter and subsequent actions that Mr. Walker has tried to rally the Spanish-speaking ministry and membership around *him personally* and to turn them against the duly selected leadership of the Church. Sadly, his communications to the administration and Council of Elders make it very clear that he rejects the authority of both over him and refuses oversight from the leadership of the Church. Although on the one hand he denies that he is leaving the United Church of God, in other statements he rejects the Church's governing structure and authority and declares that he will continue as regional coordinator regardless, while acknowledging that he and those who choose to follow him will be separate from UCGIA. And indeed, within a couple of days of his removal as regional coordinator and his writing this, he and/or those following him began taking steps to sever their relationship with (or any possible oversight by) UCGIA, yet still keep the name "United Church of God" in various countries over which Mr. Walker had been coordinator.

We are deeply saddened that he cannot see the harm he is inflicting on the membership there by his actions. In his determination to retain his position and control, he has led well-intentioned but misinformed members and elders into a separation from the United Church of God and the significant support we provide them (Latin America being the most heavily subsidized international area of UCGIA). These are not the actions of a truly caring shepherd whose primary concern is caring for the flock.

Regrettably, Mr. Walker has led others of our Spanish-speaking members into this same hostile, rebellious spirit. We sent Mario Seiglie, a longtime Spanish-speaking minister who pastored our congregation in Chile for many years, to Santiago last week to explain the situation to members, to answer questions and to protect United Church of God-Chile assets there (including the local church hall). Sadly, the local pastor and the (now radicalized) pastor of the United Churches of God in Mexico barred Mr. Seiglie from a congregational meeting on June 24, and he was obliged to rent an alternate hall for Sabbath services where he was joined by about 135 members of the Santiago congregation who expressed a desire to remain affiliated with UCGIA.

This action sadly reminds us of the apostle John's experience with a rebellious pastor who refused to accept his designated emissary: "I did write a letter to the church, but Diotrephes, who wants to be head of everything, does not recognize us! If I do come to you, I shall not forget his actions nor the slanderous things he has said in spite against us. And it doesn't stop there, for he refuses to welcome the brothers himself, and stops those who would like to do so" (3 John 9-10, Phillips Translation).

How did we get to this tragic state of affairs?

It should be obvious by now that no position of leadership or administration in UCGIA is permanent, and nothing in any of our governing documents makes *any* office, position or job permanent. We can and have changed presidents, operation managers, corporate officers and regional pastors—all of which have had much more authority than Mr. Walker as a regional coordinator. Yet he maintains that we have no right to replace him. This is simply untrue on its face.

As noted earlier, at the time of Mr. Walker's removal we chose not to give details as to the reasons why the Council and administration ordered that Mr. Walker cancel his trip and meet with them, the refusal of which led to his removal. Of course, anyone in the "real world" knows that when the person immediately over you in authority orders you to stop what you are doing and meet with him or her immediately, as an employee you know that you can be fired for refusing to comply with that action—regardless of whether you might think the order was "reasonable" or not. If any company, business or organization cannot enforce compliance with directives from those in supervisory and administrative roles, the result is anarchy.

In not publicly revealing the background behind these directions, we hoped that he would recognize his error and continue to serve God's people in a new role. Regrettably, that now seems impossible since he and a number of those under him have now repeatedly defied and attacked the leadership of the Church and encouraged others to do so. He and his supporters have established an alternative organization and openly stated that they expect other Church members, presumably those in the United States and other countries, to financially support them in their breakaway actions.

Again, Church leadership has been quiet, in large part to preserve Mr. Walker's reputation and not escalate the seriousness of the situation. However, since some are publicly accusing the Council of wrongdoing, including Mr. Walker and his supporters, we must now break our silence

and state the truth so as to prevent further division within the body of Christ, the Church. Church leadership has chosen to not respond in kind with public attacks, but to simply state the facts.

We will now be blunt: It was Mr. Walker's disdainful and rebellious behavior that led directly to his removal.

For months the Council has heard disturbing reports from the Latin American region, coming from several sources and several countries. The language differences have been a significant barrier to getting a grasp on what was really going on in that region regarding the actions both of Mr. Walker as well as some of those under him. Repeated denials of wrongdoing and accusations of "bad attitudes" toward those who raised issues kept the reality of the situation muddled.

Finally, in late May of this year, one of our Latin American ministers forwarded to the Council a series of e-mail messages sent from Mr. Walker to Spanish-speaking ministers and between Spanish-speaking ministers, as well as other troubling messages. Summaries of these messages, including in some cases key quotes, are included at the end of this message as an attachment.

The information in these memos, together with other examples of his lack of support together with rumors of a pending "split" in Latin America, dictated that Mr. Walker needed to meet with the Council immediately before traveling to Latin America to not only explain or defend actions that were, if true, clearly inappropriate, but to also be sure that he and the Council could continue to work together in a productive manner.

The most troubling document came from Leon Walker himself and was addressed to the five Latin American pastors. Dated April 6, with the subject line of "GCE Meetings," it is reproduced below in its entirety:

Hello everyone,

You should have received a packet from the Home Office regarding the upcoming General Conference of Elders. You will have received a ballot sheet in the packet regarding the issues that need to be voted on. I want to encourage all of you to vote on these issues, as they are very important. Please be sure to send (or fax) your ballot sheet soon so that it will arrive in time. Of course, those going to Cincinnati for the GCE will ballot while there.

Of course, I will not tell you how you should vote. But I would like to inform you of some of the issues involved, as you may not be aware of them.

1. The Council of Elders. You should be aware of the fact that three of the candidates (Bob Berendt, Roy Holladay and Victor Kubik) were part of the 5 Council members who fought against the approval to transfer the Home Office from Cincinnati to Texas. They also sponsored the motion to rescind that vote. In my opinion their actions were unethical and certainly against our documents. Therefore, should they be on the Council? That is for you to decide.

2. I wonder if we can support the Strategic Plan, Operations Plan and Budget. The

Council has removed scholarships from Latin America and all other areas. Can we support that actions? The Council also is reducing our budget, though I do not know at this time by how much. At the same time, the Council has decided to spend over \$400,000 on commercial TV. How can that be justified?

3. I have serious questions about the first 2 amendments. The first one is actually based on the opposition that some on the Council had regarding the move to Texas. They were not happy with the majority vote and now want to make some issues (such as this one) requiring a greater majority vote. The amendment allows for a minority of the ministry to determine that an issue needs a 60% majority rather than a simply majority (50% plus 1 person). How can that be justified? The second amendment is for the purpose of giving the Council administrative and managerial control. This is completely against the interest of the Church. The third amendment is for the pupose of making the time table for amendments more reasonable. I have no problem with this amendment.

4. The last item on the ballot sheet is the motion to set up a committee to look into our documents and to propose changes, if needed. I believe this is very much needed, as there certainly are some serious flaws in our system. Some will say that this motion is bad because the Council was not consulted. Ridiculous! The 3 officers are allowed by our documents to present a motion and there is no statement that the Council should be consulted. Actually, the opposition only highlights the need for this motion to pass.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the GCE meetings. Also please discuss these issues with the other ministers in your area—especially those who do not understand English.

Take note of the timing of this message. It was dated April 6, less than a month before the annual GCE meeting at which a number of important issues were to be voted on and four Council members chosen. You can easily draw conclusions as to whether such a communication less than a month before the annual GCE is appropriate or ethical or shows sound judgment when it is from a superior communicating directly to those who answer directly to him.

Mr. Walker has repeatedly declared that he sees no problem with what he wrote, excusing it as a permissible private memo to elder “friends” responding to questions they had. That memo was passed on to the other Spanish-speaking elders. You be the judge regarding the “private” nature of the memo.

Let’s take a closer look at this document and note some of the many ethical and factual problems with what he wrote.

Opening comments: In the first two paragraphs, a clear intent of the message is to encourage the Latin American elders to vote—and in particular ways. He states, “I would like to inform you of some of the issues involved, as you may not be aware of them”—but he then gives an obviously one-sided perspective on all matters discussed. This is hardly an attempt to objectively educate those ministers on the issues on which they would be voting—which would be the only responsible and ethical course of action under the circumstances, if he even felt it wise or appropriate to discuss those matters with them at all.

Mr. Walker inserts the disclaimer, “Of course, I will not tell you how you should vote”—but then explains exactly how they *should* vote, and why.

Paragraph 1: In his paragraph 1, he names three Council members who were up for reelection in a few weeks and gives his reasons for *not* voting for them. We will note here what should be obvious—that “bloc voting” can be encouraged in at least two ways, by either encouraging group voting *for* a particular candidate or by encouraging group voting *against* a particular candidate. Either encourages the same thing—deliberate manipulation of our balloting process. Almost anyone working in the “real world” would know that it’s widely recognized as being grossly unethical for one in a supervisory role to exercise undue influence on those under him in a matter such as this.

Mr. Walker then states of these three Council members up for reelection, “In my opinion their actions were unethical and certainly against our documents.”

Were those actions “unethical and certainly against our documents”? This very question was raised in Council meetings at the time the rescind resolution was discussed and put forward in 2008. Mr. Walker was on the Council at that time and participated in those discussions. After those meetings, the Council issued no declaration or decision that it was either unethical or against our governing documents. Had such an interpretation of our Constitution or Bylaws by the Council been made, *the rescind resolution would not have been allowed to go forward to the GCE for a vote*. Mr. Walker is well aware of that, so it is sad to see him make such statements—even if couched as an “opinion”—to persuade those directly under him to vote against certain Council candidates.

We might also note that Mr. Walker uses the loaded language that these three men “*fought* against the approval to transfer the home office from Cincinnati to Texas.” The reality is that they in good conscience were seeking to give the General Conference of Elders an opportunity to revisit a decision made hastily a year earlier and in a situation in which the economic climate had deteriorated rapidly since the previous decision. This is hardly an objective way to describe the efforts of these men, especially since a majority of the GCE who voted agreed with them when the issue was put to a vote the second time.

Paragraph 2: In his paragraph 2, he makes a statement that is simply (to be charitable) inaccurate, apparently with the intent of further prejudicing the elders against the Council and those Council members up for reelection. He writes: “The Council has removed scholarships from Latin America and all other areas. Can we support that actions?” This sentence is complete fiction. At no time has the Council of Elders “removed scholarships from Latin America and all other areas.”

The facts are that *the subject was never proposed by anyone on the Council or brought up in budget discussions*. The reality of the matter is that the previous administration, in an effort to balance the budget, shifted scholarship expenses to the Good Works program, where presumably funds from other sources will be raised to provide money for those scholarships. Again, *at no time has the Council removed such scholarships. Such funding had been shifted to the Good*

Works program in the proposed budget put forward by the then administration, not by the Council.

This could have been easily verified with anyone on the Council or in the administration at that time, but instead Mr. Walker made a highly damaging, fabricated and prejudicial statement about the supposed loss of this popular student aid program to these elders as though it were a fact—again, just a few weeks before the vote.

He goes on to make another highly prejudicial statement, not about the budget but again about the Council: “The Council also is reducing our budget, though I do not know at this time by how much.” The reality is that *the then administration determined to reduce the Latin American budget by a substantial amount* as a budget-balancing measure, and asked the Council to approve it. *The Council took no role in preparing the budget* that was presented to them by the administration. In fact, the Council later restored some funds to international subsidies that had been cut in the budget presented by the then administration.

Mr. Walker continues with another prejudicial statement, again not about the budget but about the Council: “At the same time, the Council has decided to spend over \$400,000 on commercial TV. How can that be justified?” He fails to mention that this expenditure was entirely within the planned media budget—a media budget which, incidentally, *was being cut by more than \$636,000*. The implication is that \$400,000 is being taken from other areas, including Latin American subsidies, when the reality is that the media budget was hit with the largest reduction of any budget area. Yet none of this is stated or explained. You can draw your own conclusions as to whether this prejudicial wording was another attempt to malign the Council and influence the vote on those up for reelection.

Paragraph 3: Mr. Walker next makes statements about three amendments. However, in his comments he again inserts prejudicial statements against the Council: “They [the Council members] were not happy with the majority vote . . .”

How does he know they weren’t happy with the majority vote? The reality is that the Council was unhappy with a now-divided church and proposed a good-faith effort to try to prevent such a divisive situation in the future. After one relocation in 1997 based on a nearly even ballot resulted in one split, and a second in 2007/2008 that again resulted in great division after virtual ties again, many Council members felt that a greater consensus was appropriate for such important decisions. That was the motivation for the amendment proposing at least a 60 percent majority for such major decisions, but Mr. Walker puts a negative, anti-Council spin in his opinion.

He does the same in his comments about the next Council-sponsored amendment, saying “This is completely against the interest of the Church.” This is stated as fact, not opinion, and with no explanation or justification to back up his statement.

Paragraph 4: Regarding the governance resolution, Mr. Walker again makes prejudicial statements aimed at discrediting the Council: “Some will say that this motion is bad because the Council was not consulted. Ridiculous!” He further states, “Actually, the opposition only highlights the need for this motion to pass.”

Mr. Walker does not mention the Chairman's letter distributed the week before expressing concern about that resolution or that he had asked the ministry to delay balloting on that measure until legal counsel could review the resolution and consider its many ramifications. He nowhere mentions the many significant problems with the resolution that were even then being raised on the Elders Forum.

Mr. Walker's memo was sent two days before the the governance resolution was withdrawn, on April 8, but thereafter neither the Council's reasons for doing so nor the legal opinion stating the legal basis for that removal prepared by in-house (with the help of outside specialized nonprofit legal counsel), detailing some of its considerable problems, was ever translated and shared with the Latin American ministry to explain why the Council saw a need to withdraw this resolution.

Closing comments: Mr. Walker has repeatedly declared that he saw nothing wrong with this communication, stating that it was simply a private message to friends in the ministry and that they wanted to know who the sponsors of the rescind resolution were. However, this rationalization is contradicted by the message itself. Nowhere does he say that he is responding to any inquiries about names or issues. No reference is made at all to prior inquiries or questions. Instead, we see simply a point-by-point list of the "right" way to vote on every issue on the ballot as he saw them, with an important reminder to be sure to vote before the deadline.

Mr. Walker's rationalization is also undercut by his closing words in the final paragraph: "*Also please discuss these issues with the other ministers in your area*—especially those who do not understand English" (emphasis added). If this were in reality simply a private communication to a few friends as he has stated, why does he urge these pastors specifically to "please discuss these issues with the other ministers in your area"? And what are they to "discuss" with them when his presentation of issues was so obviously one-sided? His final words do not agree with his explanation as to the circumstances of his writing and sending this message. It was also clear to his "friends" (the employed pastors in Latin America) what he intended because they sent the memo itself to those other elders. One of those elders later forwarded it to members of the Council, which is how we became aware of it.

Mr. Walker justifies himself in the writing of the foregoing memo by saying, in his June 22 Spanish-language letter to the Latin American ministry *and members* last week (the same day he was removed as director), that his actions in writing this memo were perfectly acceptable under the Council-approved document concerning private discussion groups. However, his quotes from this document are highly selective and taken out of context.

Let's look at the context of some of these quotes and see *what he did not quote*. Here are the full portions of the document from which he lifted his quotes. This well illustrates the deception inherent in his comments as he rationalizes his inappropriate behavior to others. Notice the boldfaced portions which he neglected to quote (differences in wording are due to the original document being written in English, which Mr. Walker quotes in Spanish, which is then translated back into English):

Quoting from a Council document titled "Answers to Questions about Private Discussion Groups" from July 2009, Mr. Walker writes: "This document clearly says that private

communications like mine with my friends in the ministry do not fall under the jurisdiction or responsibility of the right to intrude into private communications ‘and does not have responsibility or oversight of such communications’ and ‘nothing is innately wrong with any of these communication among ministers’ . . .”

The document to which he refers actually states (and note the boldfaced portion that he neglected to quote): “The Council addressed these questions and agreed that nothing is innately wrong with any of these, nor does the Council or Church have responsibility for or oversight of such communications. The Council acknowledged that many of those who are more ‘tech-savvy’ or in younger generations, including many elders, have a preference for online discussions and communications, and such communication is more natural to them and their peers. **What is a problem, the Council agreed, is if or when any form of communication is used to unjustly malign others or to attempt to bloc vote, both of which are violations of our ethical guidelines. The Council unanimously agreed that it condemns such actions whether done face-to-face, by telephone, in print or by any form of online communication. The means of communications isn’t the problem. Intent and actions are the problem**” (page 4).

Mr. Walker continues: “Taking into account the appropriate Christian conduct and ministerial ethics, there is no hindrance to communications among ministers...speaking with other ministers about issues that will be voted upon is permitted, and even encouraged by our governing documents.”

The document itself actually states (again, note the boldfaced portion that he neglected to quote): “Within the bounds of proper Christian conduct and ministerial ethics, there are no restrictions on communications between elders. The Council has sought a legal opinion on communication as it relates to voting on issues or Council members. **While attempts to organize bloc voting for candidates are unethical and not allowed under our governing documents**, discussion with other elders regarding issues to be voted on *is* allowed and even encouraged by our governing documents” (page 10).

Mr. Walker continues: “Quoting the legal opinion given on April 27, 2007 by the legal department of the United Church of God: “Attempts by ministers to persuade other members of the GCE to vote in a certain manner about issues of interest is permitted by the GCE and even encouraged by the Statutes of UCG... The Bylaws give members of the GCE the right to seek backing in different manners from their fellow ministerial peers about certain issues....”

The document itself actually states (and once more, note the boldfaced portion that he neglected to quote): “To quote from an April 12, 2007, legal opinion issued by UCG corporate legal counsel: “Elder attempts to both initiate and influence other GCE members to ballot a certain way on ballot issues of interest to the GCE is permissible and even encouraged by the UCG Bylaws. **In my opinion this practice would not [be] unethical or improper if done in a respectful manner. The bar on attempts to form ‘blocs’ of ballots for Council nominees or candidates should not be extended to such attempts on issues before the GCE . . .** The Bylaws give GCE members the right to obtain support from fellow elders for particular issues in a number of ways” (page 10).

As we can see from these full quotes, Mr. Walker was very selective in what he quoted to justify his actions. He omitted the portions of the document that expressly condemn exactly what he was doing in his communication with those elders under him.

As noted in the original announcement at the beginning, Mr. Walker was requested to come to the home office to discuss these serious ethical breaches with the interim president and the chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Council of Elders. He refused and instead left on a three-week trip to Latin America—where, sadly, we have learned he has spent his time shoring up support for himself.

The Council, concerned that this would happen if he again visited that region before he met with the Council to explain his actions and explore ways to remedy the obvious damage being done in Latin America, directed the interim president to require that Mr. Walker return to the home office immediately for further discussion of his actions and to try to determine the true state of affairs in areas under his supervision.

After a “request” that he do so on June 16 was ignored, the president on June 20 gave a direct order that he do so or face removal. Mr. Walker responded with his refusal to return and was removed for insubordination on June 22. That same day he sent his letter to Latin American ministers and members, telling them, “I want to be perfectly clear that I do not accept being removed as Regional Director” and proclaiming that he refuses to accept the jurisdiction of the Council or administration over him. In so doing, and by his direct insubordination, Mr. Walker has, by his own actions, effectively removed himself from the ministry of UCGIA.

We emphasize again that we are deeply saddened by this sad chain of events. Again, we withheld these details in the hope that Mr. Walker would realize the gravity and seriousness of his actions and be humble enough to repent. We were also unaware at the time we posted our announcement that he had already sent the letter to the Latin American elders and brethren stating his refusal to accept his removal. Sadly, rather than cooperating, Mr. Walker has been and is actively campaigning in Latin America to pull toward himself as many members and elders as possible.

Regrettably, some members here in the United States are also being taken in, to the point that there is open talk of setting up one or more bank accounts where U.S. supporters can send money to support Mr. Walker’s breakaway organization. What is truly regrettable is that some U.S. elders, including apparently at least a few salaried elders, are also supporting him, even to the point of justifying his divisive acts. We hope they have simply been misled and are unaware of the facts presented in this letter. It’s for that reason that we have had to be candid as to what is going on.

As elders in the Church of God, we have a clear responsibility to protect the flock entrusted to our care. Such division and open insubordination cannot and will not be tolerated. Scripture has much to say about such actions. Let’s notice a few:

“For *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry*” (1 Samuel 15:23).

“Now I urge you, brethren, *note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ,*

but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

“And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, *note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed*. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, *and that there be no divisions among you*, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

“For *where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).

Dear brethren, we must not be followers of men, regardless of what their reputations or works have been in the past. Only *one* is to be our role model and the one we follow, and that is Jesus Christ. It is not Christlike to slander and attack those with whom you disagree. It is not Christlike to deceptively manipulate others with smooth and persuasive words to accomplish one’s own nefarious ends. It is not Christlike to proclaim one’s righteousness even as one destroys the reputations of others and builds a following for oneself, making merchandise of the members we are called to serve and for whom Christ died.

All elders and ministers are held to a very high standard. Those who are unwilling to meet that standard, either by continuing to spread division, by attacking the duly elected or appointed leaders of the Church, by providing moral support to those who do, and who undermine the work of the Church, will be held accountable.

With deep concern,

Dennis Luker, president, United Church of God
Roy Holladay, outgoing Council of Elders chairman
Melvin Rhodes, incoming Council of Elders chairman
Victor Kubik, Ministerial Services operation manager

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ATTACHMENT: Summaries and quotes from communications sent to Council members documenting the problems in the Latin American region.

Other than the message from Leon Walker to Spanish-speaking pastors regarding voting for the then upcoming annual GCE meeting, several other significant documents were sent. These include:

1. An April 13 e-mail from a U.S. member to a Latin American pastor including a lengthy document attacking the Council for various alleged unethical actions. This member had earlier been met with by several ministers to respond to his charges and to see if actual wrongdoing had taken place. The man could not substantiate any of his accusations and other accusations were demonstrated to be false. Other areas, primarily having to do with his disagreement over the decision to rescind the move of the home office to Texas and build a campus, etc., were left as an agreement to disagree. Weeks later, this same individual wrote again and distributed another lengthy document, repeating some of the charges based on speculation and hearsay that he knew he could not substantiate, and added new attacks on the Council for backing administrative changes and falsely stating they had acted “illegally” in withdrawing the controversial governance resolution.

This member urged the Latin American pastor to circulate his slanderous document. That pastor then circulated this e-mail and second document to many other Spanish-speaking ministers, including Leon Walker, telling them: “I’m resending you a letter of great importance. I hope we can receive more information like this before the minister’s meetings in May [referring to the May GCE meeting]. Unfortunately, the letter is in English, but I know that all of us can read in such language.” Mr. Walker knew of the distribution of this derogatory anti-Council document and allowed its distribution anyway.

This same document maligning the Council of Elders was later translated into Spanish and widely distributed among the Spanish-speaking ministry and membership by parties as yet unknown.

2. An April 29 e-mail from Leon Walker to six Latin American ministers in which he forwarded a lengthy letter written by another American member similarly attacking the Council. Mr. Walker’s note to the ministers read: “Hello everyone. Attached is a letter from a member in Ohio to the Council. He said that it could be shared. It is a very, very good letter and he is correct in everything.” That letter had been translated into Spanish.

In a later meeting with Roy Holladay and Victor Kubik in which this message was discussed, Mr. Walker admitted that the letter he’d forwarded to these ministers contained statements that he later found were erroneous. However, he had never made any effort to go back and state that to those with whom he had shared the letter, telling them that it was “correct in everything.” This derogatory (and many would find defamatory) letter was also widely distributed in the Latin region with the blessing of Mr. Walker and the Latin American ministry.

3. A May 20 letter from the wife of a Latin American minister in which she expressed her fear and sorrow over how members were being abused and mistreated in her country. She further detailed how official communications from the Council chairman about important church issues were not being translated and shared with the membership or were being twisted in how they were presented to the congregation.

She stated that the pastor had “conspired” against one particular family “because they were a nuisance in his plans to deceive the congregation regarding what was going on at the home office.” This family had been “openly informing the congregation” of developments, even translating official UCGIA communications into Spanish so other Spanish-speaking members could be informed, with the result that “the more they informed the congregation, the more [the pastor] would discredit them, to throw up a smoke screen so nobody could really see what is really going on.”

Multiple witnesses in that area have confirmed that while official Council communications to the membership were withheld and not translated into Spanish, documents written in English for the purpose of undermining and attacking various Council members were translated into Spanish by parties yet unknown and received wide distribution among the Latin American ministry and membership—including at least the one that Mr. Walker himself had forwarded as noted above.

In his later meeting with Mr. Holladay and Mr. Kubik, when asked why documents attacking the Council had been translated into Spanish and distributed while official United Church of God communications, including those that countered these attacks, had *not* been translated, Mr. Walker stated that they lacked the financial resources to do so.

4. A May 25 letter from a Latin American elder detailing how, over a period of months but particularly leading up to the May 2010 GCE meeting, he had been sent e-mails and documents critical of the Council by both his pastor and Leon Walker and that they had requested that these documents be shared with others. This elder’s letter, translated into English, stated in part:

In conjunction with all of this, during all this time the Home Office team has been updating us through the letters sent from the Home Office to the local ministry, but they were in English, a language I don’t speak and can barely read.

I am told that these letters are not being translated into Spanish because of the costs. Some have been partly translated but were never read to the congregations nor mentioned from the pulpit the content of your letters which explained the reasons for the removal of the controversial resolution [i.e., the governance resolution] and the reasons why Mr. Kilough was asked to resign...

Yet, I can’t help but notice that the letters criticizing the Council have been translated and distributed in all of Latin America, as you can see by the e-mails I am sending you which were forwarded to me. Why is this happening? I can’t help but conclude that my superiors are against the Council. The information sent in this way obviously produces enmity toward all of you.

But I have not received from these sources any of the Council defense regarding these “letters” of criticism. . . .

I thought in the beginning, for various reasons, I should not get involved, and in that way I wouldn’t have any problems with anyone. But now, I can’t avoid any longer my duty. My decision not to speak with my superiors is due to the fact that if I do, they won’t continue to send me information, but they will do so with the rest of the ministry, deacons, and other leadership in general.

If we only continually get only one side of the issues, how can we judge with righteous judgment?

If this causes me, who belongs to the ministry, confusion and a conflict of loyalties, how much more confusion and conflict will it cause the rest of the membership?

In fact, at this time in Santiago there is a climate of distrust and genuine fear between the members and toward the ministry. People are truly confused. All of this has me deeply concerned and I request your help in this difficult situation.

While this elder had considerably more to say, the quotes here reveal a systematic effort to turn the Spanish-speaking ministry and membership against the duly chosen leadership of the United Church of God, *an International Association*. He finally could take it no more and chose to speak out to alert the Council as to what was going on in the region and in his country in particular. This is part of what alerted the Council and administration to the depth of the problems in that region and a systematic effort to undermine the leadership of UCGIA.

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