

CALL TO BROTHERHOOD UNITY AND REVIVAL

August 27, 2005

FROM: Elders and Regional Evangelists
Los Angeles International Church of Christ

To: All fellow churches around the world

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are sure many of you have been in much prayer and thought about the Kingdom of God and our future direction. While we believe that we have seen God work in some powerful ways over the last several years, we would all agree that Satan has also wreaked havoc during that same period of time, by sowing many seeds of doubt, mistrust, faithlessness, bitterness, slander, luke-warmness and dullness. This has caused too many to turn to false doctrine and the world and additionally prevented many more from coming to Christ.

After much prayer, we humbly put before you the following call to unity and revival. We know that there have been numerous churches making efforts toward revival, and perhaps succeeding, but there is an even greater power that comes from an entire brotherhood uniting, fasting, and praying together as one body for unity and revival. There are many of us who believe that in order for our churches to go forward and multiply, the time has come for us to reaffirm what we believe, set aside a day to fast, pray, repent and forgive, recommit to having the same expectations for everyone in our church, and organize ourselves in such a way that we have a brotherhood that has supporting ligaments (Ephesians 4:16), not just within one congregation, but between the leaderships of congregations.

It may be beneficial to note that coming out of the Long Beach meeting in November, 2002, there was support from the vast majority for maintaining a Kingdom leadership structure within the world sectors. Because of the chaos, suspicions, and sweeping accusations fostered by the Kriete letter in early 2003, most brothers who were serving in those Kingdom leadership positions resigned, with the exception of a few portions of several world sectors that still provide oversight outside of the United States.

Numerous people have expressed that there is a significant need for leadership, of some nature, on a Kingdom level to assist in meeting needs that cannot be met on a local level. While we certainly believe the local leadership needs to be able to make decisions concerning their own congregations, we have also seen how fractured, discouraged, and weak any church becomes when the leadership is isolated and fails to solicit counsel and discipling from mature evangelists and elders outside their own congregations. (We, here in LA, have benefited greatly from the wisdom and counsel of numerous outside evangelists and elders that we have invited in.) We also realize

that many smaller and younger congregations may need greater assistance than others that have more mature leaderships.

Although we do not know exactly how this structure of “supporting ligaments” will be organized, we are certain that the Spirit will lead us to one that is spiritual, faithful, respectful, and accountable. There are many details to work out, but we are making the following proposal:

1. A steering committee be commissioned to analyze and make recommendations for by-laws regarding a future leadership structure, i.e. length of term, size, scope of responsibility, etc. We recommend the number on this steering committee be 7, but the actual number will be decided by the representatives of the churches who have joined by September 5th in Seattle.
2. The actual members serving on this steering committee will be nominated and elected in Seattle by representatives of those churches who have joined by September 5, 2005.
3. Each church that chooses to participate will have a representative that will be qualified to vote on the ratification or modification of the by-laws.
4. The steering committee will be for one year or until a different structure is implemented.
5. The steering committee will notify the congregations of a future meeting where recommendations will be discussed and voted on.

We have assembled a basic list of core convictions and principles upon which most, if not all, of us have lived our Christian lives since the beginning of our walk with God. We have attached a document that states a declaration of these convictions and principles.

We have made every effort to be comprehensive, without being verbose. Although we realize there are many other convictions that could have been inserted or stated somewhat differently, we have attempted to be concise, whenever possible. The steering committee may choose to make further recommendations that can be voted on by the representatives.

While we have made every effort to base this call and declaration of beliefs and practices on the commands and principles of God’s Word, we are in no way claiming that this proposal is, by itself, infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit. We in no way want to imply that this is a better proposal than anyone else could make. We are sure that there are many other spiritual brothers and churches that could have made proposals that would have been equally as good or better.

Although in composing this and in the spirit of humility promoted in this document, we have solicited the advice and input of numerous godly and respected brothers around the Kingdom, we want everyone to know that this letter is authored and initiated by the Leadership Group of the Los Angeles International Church of Christ. We do, however, deeply appreciate the ideas, thoughts and prayers of many through this process.

As your brothers, we are inviting you and your congregation to join us in this call to unity and revival. We are calling our congregation to a day of fasting and prayer for unity and revival on Friday, October 7th, 2005 and invite your congregation to join with us. We are building a list of churches that likewise affirm these Biblical beliefs and principles and choose to join us in this effort. We encourage you to speak with your leadership groups and prayerfully consider this proposal. We realize that there may be some churches that join us that may use slightly different wording or phrases in the way they express some of their beliefs or practices (such as small groups, family groups, etc.), but have the same basic core beliefs and practices. We also realize that there will be some who may not be ready to join us in this action.

Some of you may desire to know more information than we are able to provide at this time. However, we wanted to communicate with everyone before the Seattle Conference so that you could have time to have discussions with your local leaderships and perhaps elect to join us by September 5th. We plead for your prayers and hearts as the Spirit begins this historic process of rebuilding a greater unity and revival among our worldwide fellowship of disciples.

If you desire for your congregation to join us in this endeavor, please reply to: unity@icoc.org.

If you have further questions, feel free to correspond with Al Baird at al_baird@icoc.org or Bruce Williams at brucewilliams@icoc.org

STATEMENT OF UNIFIED BELIEFS, PRACTICES, AND BROTHERHOOD

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23 NIV)

As brothers who have been brought together by the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we have a passion to love, honor, and obey God. As His disciples bonded by the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and saved by grace in the waters of baptism, our collective vision is to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world. From that vision, our belief that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and our intense desire to please the Lord through seeing Christ's church grow in spirit and number, we commit ourselves to the following beliefs, practices, and brotherhood:

Unified Beliefs

1. Every member in every church is expected to be a true disciple through belief in Jesus as God's Son (*John 20:31*), a decision to deny self and surrender all to Christ's Lordship (*Luke 9:23ff; 14:33*), complete repentance of sin (*Acts 2:38*), confession of Jesus as Lord (*Romans 10:9*), and baptism for the forgiveness of sin and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:38*) and to be raised to a new life. (*Romans 6:1-4*)
2. Every member in every church is to share in Christ's mission to seek and save the lost. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)
3. Every member in every church is expected to be totally committed to the body life of the church which includes attendance at all the services, consistent sacrificial giving, and joyful and growing "one another" discipling relationships. (*Romans 12:10, Hebrews 3:12, 13; 10:24-25*)

Unified Practices

1. For the purpose of outreach, as well as mature discipling, every member will be in a small group. (*Acts 20:20, Colossians 4:15*)
2. Every member in every church is to financially support both local and world missions. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)
3. We are committed to remembering the poor. (*Galatians 2:10*)
4. We are committed to women having a ministry role in training other women. (*Titus 2:3-4*)
5. We are committed to providing resources to supply leadership for our young people, to insure ministries such as the teen and campus thrive and multiply. (*Acts 19:9, 10*)
6. We are committed to free and respectful communication within the brotherhood. (*1 Peter 2:17*)
7. We are committed to obedience to the command of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, and in that spirit expect that disciples should therefore only date and marry disciples.
8. While we recognize the need for local decision-making, we are committed to our congregation soliciting and receiving outside godly input and influence. (*1 Peter 5:5*)

Unified Brotherhood

1. Missionary Unity: We are committed to practically coordinate resources for the evangelization of the world and provide necessary representation and cooperation. *(2 Corinthians 8)*
2. Kingdom Leadership: We are committed to a collective leadership that will maintain unity, foster revival, and advance the gospel. *(John 17:20-23)* While we understand the need for each congregation's leadership to make the decisions regarding their local work, we also recognize the need for leadership on a Kingdom level to meet needs such as, cooperation and fulfillment of missions support, regional coordination of training and discipling, provide accountability to these beliefs and practices, when necessary, and provide assistance to meeting staffing needs, when asked, etc.
3. Conflict Resolution: We have all born painful witness to the past three years' turmoil fueled by an unbridled spirit of suspicion, accusation, judgment, generalization, and public slander. We firmly commit, with this in mind, to Biblical conflict resolution and loving confrontation. We resolve to address concerns and disagreements as privately as possible, as Jesus' teaching directs *(Matthew 18:15ff)* Though we affirm the charge for all disciples to privately and gently confront sin *(Galatians 6:1, 2 Timothy 2:24)* and the rare need for leaderships to publicly mark false teachers, we commit, in the spirit of family, to making every effort to guard one another's churches' and individual reputations in what we publicly say and write.

Under the submission and Lordship of Jesus Christ, the leaderships of the following churches commit to these unified beliefs, practices, and brotherhood *"...that the world may believe" (John 17:21 NIV) "...and that by believing...have life in his name." (John 20:31 NIV)*

Los Angeles International Church of Christ