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## FIFTH EPOCHAL FELLOWSHIP

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Dedicated to the study and dissemination of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*

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REPORT OF PLANNING MEETING  
FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER  
Scottsdale, Arizona  
January 27-28, 1990

by Marilyn Kulieke, Vice President

A joint planning meeting between General Councilors, society representatives, and Area Coordinators was sponsored by Fifth Epochal Fellowship on January 27 and 28, 1990. This meeting and time for socializing was organized by the Fraternal Relations Committee chaired by Peter Laurence and centered around the discussion of a mission statement for Fifth Epochal Fellowship presented by Paul Snider at the July, 1989 meeting of the General Council.

The meeting weekend began with a Friday night social event sponsored by Arizona Urantia Book readers and was held at the home of J.J. and Geri Johnson in Phoenix. Members of the planning committee included Sue Smith, Dick & Peggy Johnson, and J.J. & Geri Johnson.

Food for the social and transportation to the Franciscan Center were provided by Eric Cosh, Annalea Adams, Beth Wenger, Chrystal Harris, Tom Allen, Karen Johnson, Arley Grubb, Kelly Tippet, Martha Iverson, Don Risk, and Carol King. Bobbie Dreier also gave a lot help.

The event was expertly organized and provided an opportunity for readers from Arizona, Area Coordinators, society representatives, and Councilors to get a chance to meet and talk with others.

The actual meeting which began Saturday, January 27 at 1:00 P.M. was divided into four parts: creative visioning related to developing a mission; a presentation of a potential mission and the organizational structure which might support it; small group discussions of organizational mission and structure; and a large group synthesis of the key themes that evolved throughout the meeting.

The meeting began with a creative visioning exercise led by Marilyn Kulieke, Gloriann Harris, and Mary Daly. The exercise started off with the telling of a story about a monster in a forest with the people of the forest being given the task to build a building in the field surrounding the forest. The story included the tribulations of the foresters as they readied themselves to build in the field. The group was then asked to draw a picture of what they envisioned the field to look like. This was followed by a discussion of some of the differences in the fields and what this might suggest in terms of the assumptions that each individual held for the way that he or she viewed the future of Fifth Epochal Fellowship.

Paul Snider, a General Councilor, then presented a series of five "Urantia Missions" for the Fellowship which he developed. They are as follows:

MISSION 5

Promote the spiritual transformation of mankind by living the teachings of The Urantia Book, the eventual realization of the worldwide brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

Mission 4

Develop and maintain a worldwide network of Urantia Book study groups.

Mission 3

Disseminate the teachings of The Urantia Book.

Mission 2

Disseminate The Urantia Book.

Mission 1

Occupy conceptual space--continue to exist as an organized worldwide fellowship.

There are several characteristics of this model. First, each mission subsumes all of the missions under it (i.e. 2 subsumes 1, and 5 subsumes 1 through 4). The missions also are sequenced from easiest to the hardest and from a more physical quality to the mission, through mindal to a more spiritual mission. In terms of the priorities of each mission they also move outward with mission 1 being the most important priority.

After the model was presented, Paul also provided a mission-based organizational structure which would align the structure of the organization with the five proposed missions. In this structure Paul suggested a three-part model with an independent Judicial Committee and the separation of the legislative (General Council) from the Executive Committee with different chairpersons. The General Council would remain the same with Councilors being elected by the Triennial Delegate Assembly. The Executive Committee would be differently constituted, consisting of an Executive Vice President (chair), a secretary, and a group of vice presidents: VP Finance, VP Planning and Communications, VP Operations and Support, VP Mission 5. Only the Executive Vice President would serve on the General Council as well as the Executive Committee. Paul discussed the benefits of this organizational structure in aligning with a mission-based organization.

After the presentation of the mission and structure, the Councilors, society representatives, and Area Coordinators broke into small groups facilitated by members of the Fraternal Relations Committee: Scott Forsythe, Michael Painter, Wesley Smith, Steve Law, and Gard Jameson. Each group met for three and one-half hours discussing the proposed mission and organizational structure. Each group reported on their discussions which were varied in emphasis and content.

In the final session which was led by Peter Laurence, there was an attempt to synthesize the information from the diverse group reports into several themes which reoccurred throughout the presentations. Although many issues emerged during this segment of the meeting, two broad themes emerged which encompassed the majority of comments. They were: the true participation of groups and individuals in the Fellowship and the necessity of a mission statement for the Fellowship. The following paragraphs describe these themes in greater detail.

The theme which related to how individuals participate in the organization centered basically around one philosophical question: Does Fifth Epochal Fellowship function more as a service organization which provides support, coordination and networking for a diverse Urantia Book reader community throughout the world? Each of these philosophies would dictate the extent to which the organization views itself as inclusive or exclusive and centralized or decentralized. It would also dictate the extent to which the organizational structure is aligned with a governmental structure. In line with these different views, participants raised a number of concerns related to centralization, representation, responsibility, responsiveness/accountability, and the separation of powers.

In terms of centralization, some participants expressed the concern that too many decisions related to the organization were made by the central organization, in particular by the Executive Committee and the General Council. It was felt that if Fifth Epochal Fellowship was too focused on centralization then the general organization may be off track and this focus might serve to defeat local efforts. In fact, it was noted by one group that the constitution was crafted in such a way that societies were given almost total autonomy to fulfill their organizational purpose according to their own devices. An analogy was made that compared the societies to the line staff and the central organization as the staff. The line staff should ask the staff to do certain things. In turn, the core processes in the organization need to be local. It was felt that the organization needs to make a clear statement and act consistently with relation to a centralized and decentralized focus.

The representation of individuals in the central organization, in particular the General Council, was felt to be too exclusive by many of the participants. Exclusivity was defined in many ways. Some felt that a broader geographical representation was needed. The representation of members through the societies was also felt by some to be too limited. Some suggested that societies have not had adequate impact in the centralized decision-making process. It was also stated that members-at-large were under-represented in the General Council although it was also noted that they may not want to participate more actively in organizational decision-making. It was suggested that study groups also need to be considered. Different solutions were suggested to address these problems. Some of these suggestions included:

1. creating a revised organizational structure which would allow for better representation of societies and members-at-large (possibly a General Council being made up of society representatives or a second decision-making body. This process might be started by the entire General Council resigning and society representatives replacing the members of the Council);

2. having members-at-large associate themselves with societies or meet with each other and the central organization to provide their viewpoints;
3. having conclaves more frequently and continuously;
4. having more meetings between General Councilors and societies, members, members-at-large, and individuals in study groups;
5. developing organizational groups of the same numbers of individuals which are not based on geographical location;
6. being creative in how the organization approaches representation.

The issue of inclusiveness of all readers throughout the world was addressed as well as representation in the central organization. It was felt that it is very important that the Fellowship be conceptualized as a worldwide fellowship of readers. Conceptually, this view would subsume other organizations although it does not mean that other organizations have to be a part of the Fellowship.

A relationship between representation and responsibility was noted also by one participant. If representation in the decision-making process becomes broader, then accompanied by that must be increased responsibility by increased numbers of individuals to become informed about centralized concerns.

It was stated that too much effort might be required by too many individuals if representation becomes broader. It might also siphon energy and effort from local efforts to centralized efforts which could result in a more centralized focus.

Another issue that surfaced with participants was the responsiveness of the central organization to members and readers in the field. The relationship between accountability and responsiveness was made. Do members and readers in the field feel that the central organization is being responsive (accountable) to their needs? It was questioned whether or not the General Council is accountable to the needs of the reader community and whether or not it was the recipient of centralized resources. Responsiveness might not only be defined in terms of the structures and activities that are set up, but also as an attitude that pervades the organization. It was felt that having meetings such as this one was important in providing feedback between central and local and that it helps everyone minimize distortions and enhances communication. It was also felt that there needs to be mechanisms set into place which will enhance communication and responsiveness. Extending invitations to regional conferences to talk and receive feedback on the central organization and other local efforts was suggested as one way of becoming more responsive. Surveys and polls were felt to be another way to gain member views. Common interest groups were also suggested as a means to encourage communication on a broader scale.

The separation of powers within the central organizational structure was suggested by several participants as a means of providing internal accountability within the central organization. It was not seen as an urgent need; however, it was felt that depending on "goodness" rather than three separate groups (legislative, executive, and judicial) was not a good governmental structure. The need for a counterbalance between the executive and the legislative in terms of a dynamic relationship was felt to be important to the way the Fellowship does its work. It was stated that the separation of powers needs to be viewed as a means rather than an end. Most important is that there is a system that has checks and balances. This helps eliminate conflicts of interest that might occur with an organization.

A second theme that emerged during the large group summary was a question of the importance of mission to the Fellowship. It was felt by some that a mission statement was not really important and that the organization should spend its time producing results rather than determining a mission. Others felt that there is power in the mission statement which an individual can etch in his/her mind. Without a good mission statement the organization would stand still for another fifty years. The creative process for determining the mission was felt to be a good process for taking an inventory and determining whether or not the organization is on target. Taking a long-range view of the effects of future growth was felt to be helpful for the organization. It was felt to be important that with a new mission we would revise the publication "Our Task" and communicate this to others.

Many different conceptions of what the mission should look like were expressed by participants. It was felt that the mission should be poetic and inspiring, be simple, include the ability for course correction, and might include more short-term missions. It was stated that Jesus' mission statement could be found on p.2057 and that this might provide us with some guidance in forming one for the Fellowship. The following mission statement created in one of the small groups was as follows: "KNOW THE TEACHINGS, SHARE THE TEACHINGS, LIVE THE TEACHINGS."

During the comments on the Fellowship's mission, there was a good amount of discussion on the concept of supremacy and how it applies to the role of the Fellowship. It was expressed that the purpose statement in the constitution of the Fellowship is a statement of supremacy. "Fostering" a worldwide fellowship is an act of supremacy. It was stated that the concept of supremacy is unique and wide-viewed, and since supremacy is the purpose of this age, this concept must be an important guide for the work of the Fellowship. It was felt that if the purpose of the Fellowship was studied it might be possible to hone in on the dynamic process of supremacy. This dynamic process was felt to be tied to "relationships," and the social implications of the work and the fact that things will not happen instantaneously were felt to be two aspects of the concept of supremacy in relation to our work.

The meeting ended with several individuals expressing their views of the experience that the Fellowship is currently undertaking. Many thanks to the following society representatives and Area Coordinators who shared their insights and views at this special meeting: Dan Anderson, Alaska; John Andrews, Alaska; Claudia Ayers, California; Beth Bartley, New York; Thern Blackburn, Utah; Eric Cosh, Arizona; Mary Daly, South Dakota; Robert De Matteis, Arizona; Peggy Douglass, Colorado; Frank Falkner, Arizona; Duane Faw, California; Alison Gardner, Massachusetts; David Glass, Texas; Arley Grubb, Arizona; Don Heinerikson, Missouri; Alice & Eef Hoedemaker, British Columbia, Canada; Merritt Horn, Illinois; Adrienne Jarnagin, Texas; Peggy Johnson, Arizona; Patrick Kopp, Iowa; Scott McDougall, Ontario, Canada; Virginia Mellencamp, New Mexico; Charlene Moore-Sneve, Minnesota; Mike Pittman, Illinois; William Rocap, Connecticut; Chrissy & Lee Smith, California; Sue Smith, Arizona; Wesley Smith, Illinois; Larry Watkins, Virginia; Mike Wood, Kansas; Dan Young, Oklahoma; Betty & Ralph Zehr, New York.

In addition there were thirty-one Councilors present, each of whom, it turn, will be able to share information from the planning meeting with their respective societies.

MK/mp  
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