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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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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LETTER

April, 1990

Dear Members of Fifth Epochal Fellowship:

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Executive Committee took place for the first time at our new 529 Wrightwood headquarters on Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10, 1990. This summary report will keep you apprised of our deliberations and actions on your behalf.

### SUMMARY OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS

1. Six new International Area Coordinators recommended by Berkeley Elliott for the International Fellowship Committee were approved for service. In Australia: Kathleen Swadling, Sydney; Peter Webb, Perth; Neil Francey, Brisbane. In New Zealand: Susan Hemmingsen, Wellington; Neville Twist, Auckland. In the Netherlands: Bauk Begemann will assume Henry's duties. The Executive Committee warmly welcomes these new AC's and expresses thanks for their willingness to serve.
2. It was agreed that the "Oath of Office" proposal made by the Ad Hoc Committee on Ethics be considered at the April meeting of the Executive Committee together with language to be drafted by the Judicial Committee to facilitate consideration of a By-Law amendment to enable adoption of such an Oath. At the April meeting the Executive Committee will determine, consistent with the Constitution, in what manner the committee's report and recommendations will be forwarded to the General Council.
3. The Executive Committee voted to authorize the office liaison to research locations and timing in Florida for a possible mid-year (January/February) 1991 meeting of the General Council. A proposal for such a meeting will be made to the General Council in July for final action.
4. It was agreed that the Resource Guide for Secondary Works will include only the materials originally planned and will not be produced in a loose-leaf binder format at this time. Special Projects and Publications will develop the final design and a target publication date will be late June, 1990 just prior to the International Conference.
5. The Executive Committee approved the chair's proposal that two sub-committees be established to work on the following activities:
  - (a) **The Organization's Name Sub-Committee** including determining factors, legal considerations, final selection process, timing: The committee will be comprised of Steve Dreier (chair), David Elders, Lynne Kulieke, Brent St. Denis, John Hay, Dan Massey, and Mo Siegel.
  - (b) **Programs and Services Sub-Committee** including overall planning and development: This committee will be chaired by Marilyn Kulieke and include Avi Dogim, Berkeley Elliott, Bob Bruyn, Harry McMullan, Gard Jameson, Peter Laurence, and Jim Johnston.

It was agreed that each sub-committee will develop a plan which engages the entire membership of Fifth Epochal Fellowship in the process. Each Committee will meet on Friday, April 27, 1990 prior to the Executive Committee meeting and will make an interim report at that meeting.

6. Approval was given by unanimous vote to the plan drafted by Domestic Extension for the use by both Area Coordinators and Societies of the mailing list maintained in trust by the central office staff. The plan includes a use agreement with the AC's to protect the integrity of the list and to respect the privacy of those persons on it. Additionally, inasmuch as we maintain this list in trust on behalf of our entire organization, we will request the participation of the Societies in the development of a plan to facilitate their use of the list to serve their purposes.

### REPORTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

1. Lynne Kulieke reported that there were at least 13 new member-at-large applications in process which will be presented at the next meeting.

2. Steve Dreier reported that the attorneys had reviewed the Society Licensing Agreements and had advised us that the November letters from URANTIA Foundation to Societies suggesting that Societies must affiliate only with a licensed organization were not valid legally or factually. Inasmuch as the licensing agreement only requires affiliation with URANTIA Brotherhood, and since Fifth Epochal Fellowship is the successor-in-interest to URANTIA Brotherhood, continued affiliation with FEF does not constitute "cause" for termination of the agreements. Steve Dreier and Avi Dogim will be contacting each Society informally to discuss their status.

3. In response to our formal request to URANTIA Foundation that we purchase *Urantia Books* for re-sale from them at distributor or retailer discounts (40-50%), we were informed that since we did not meet the criteria established for retailers or distributors, the maximum discount we could qualify for would be 25%. Since there are other options open to us to obtain books for re-sale, the sub-committee on Programs and Services will consider this matter and make appropriate recommendations for Executive Committee consideration.

4. Gard Jameson reported that financial support for the organization is generally stronger than in the past. He noted that if this support continues we will be able to maintain and even expand the level of services we can provide to Societies, study groups, Area Coordinators, and individuals in the field as they do the all-important work of study and dissemination of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*.

5. In John Hay's absence, a report was given on the status of the upcoming International Conference in Snowmass, Colorado this summer. At the time of this report (March 10, 1990) there were 518 adult registrants. As of this date (April 12, 1990) registrations have reached 784 total, comprised of 601 adults, and 183 children. In addition, speakers for the full program are now committed. In summary, there is every indication that this conference could be one of the most successful coordinated to date by the organization.

6. In an effort to insure that the conference remains focused on study, fellowship, and spiritual sharing, it was agreed that organizational meetings would be held either before or after the conference itself. Accordingly, the planned Area Coordinator and Society Conclave meetings would be held during the day on Saturday, June 30, 1990. The General Council meeting will begin after the Conference on Thursday, July 5, 1990 earlier in the day than originally planned (noon or 1:00pm start). The Roundtable meeting of Associated Groups would be held during the week as an open special interest group meeting since its focus would be the interchange of creative ideas and activities for the broader study and dissemination of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* into the world community.

7. David Elders reported that in response to our request to schedule a dialogue meeting with the Trustees, we were informed by them that while they would like to meet, our requested date of March 11 was unsatisfactory. It was agreed by consensus that we write to accept their suggested agenda and attempt to schedule such a meeting on April 29, 1990. [This was done and as of April 12, 1990 we have received no formal response.]

8. It was reported that there is funding available for us to continue the highly successful Library Placement Program facilitated by the Domestic Extension Committee. This will be announced in the *BULLETIN* and in a letter to Societies and Area Coordinators, along with instructions for participation.

9. David Elders reported that in an effort to facilitate URANTIA Foundation's participation in the American Booksellers Convention we had offered them the use of the display we purchased some years ago for that purpose. Additionally, we offered to meet with them to share our experience and instruct them on display assembly. They turned down our offers with thanks.

10. Gard Jameson gave a report on the status of the purchase by Fifth Epochal Fellowship of the 529 Wrightwood building. Funding plans have been finalized and the closing is scheduled for early April, on schedule with our original contract of purchase.

11. Steve Dreier commented that the attorneys have advised us that URANTIA Foundation's or its supporters apparent claims that our organization "no longer exists" by virtue of losing the trademarks is not true legally or in fact. Further, he reported that the licensing laws protect the rights not only of an ex-Licenser but also an ex-Licensee. The significance of this is that URANTIA Foundation has as much responsibility to refrain from causing harm to the successor-in-interest to URANTIA Brotherhood, Fifth Epochal Fellowship, as does the ex-licensee not to harm the licenser by further utilization of the registered marks. It was agreed that we will instruct the attorneys to prepare a letter notifying URANTIA Foundation of our concerns in this area and which we would be able to distribute to our membership clarifying this situation.

12. Bob Bruyn reported that it was his committee's recommendation that continuation of the "Record of Decisions" project begun two years ago await the purchase of an optical scanner to facilitate the placement and indexing of our historical and current decisions in a computer data base. He also noted that the "Oral History" project would begin with personal interviews with the approximately 32 persons from the Forum and Seventy who have not yet moved to the Mansion Worlds.

13. Peter Laurence, chair of Fraternal Relations, reported that in his capacity as Acting Director for the North America Interfaith Network, he is able to maintain active involvement with the community of existing religious organizations. Since their International Conference convenes in Seattle at the same time as our International Conference, Peter reported on the altered plans for Fraternal Relations' programs at this summer's conference. Specifically, Harry McMullan will convene the Roundtable of Related Organizations, Gard Jameson will moderate the panel presentations featuring two guest speakers representing major religious traditions, and Meredith Sprunger will chair the scheduled meeting of Fraternal Relations with attending clergy.

14. Avi Dogim reported that the Grand Canyon Society for Readers of *The Urantia Book* has met virtually all qualifications and will probably be installed as a new chartered Society on the weekend of May 18/19, 1990. The reader group in Florida considering Society status will be meeting over Memorial Day weekend to make their final decision. Finally, Avi reported receiving an inquiry from a reader group in Quebec interested in pursuing affiliation as a chartered Society.

15. Berkeley Elliott reported, in addition to her proposal for new Area Coordinators (see above), her committee's suggested ideas for consideration by the AC's: the use of flyers listing local study group activities to be placed in bookstores, on bulletin boards, etc.; the use of small advertisements in local newspapers providing telephone numbers to call for study group information; the use of listings in local phone directories such as "*Urantia Book Study Group of...*"; the encouragement of projects such as library placement, the development of study materials, videos, and children's stories to stimulate group activity in support of study and dissemination.

16. Jim Johnston reported that the next issue of the *BULLETIN* is finished and should be mailed in mid-April. He is planning another issue for late May-early June. He further noted that the *Study Group*

*Herald* Management Committee has selected Martin Greenhut as editor and was now drafting plans for first issue content and schedule.

17. The Executive Committee discussed the issues associated with Phil Rolnick's letter to the General Council regarding our procedures and Marilyn Kulieke's written interchange with him on the subject, and agreed as follows: Steve Dreier will contact Phil to discuss the issues he has raised and the Judicial Committee will undertake an evaluation of our procedures during the last year and report to the General Council. [This discussion and agreed-upon action preceded Phil's most recent March 23, 1990 letter which the trustees mailed recently with a cover note to a widespread but indeterminate number of readers on their mailing list. Phil also tendered his resignation from the General Council in this most recent letter.]

18. Marilyn Kulieke received the thanks of the Executive Committee for the wonderfully organized and truly meaningful orientation and dinner which preceded the Executive Committee meeting on Friday, March 9, 1990 at 529 Wrightwood Avenue. The purpose of this dinner was to commemorate the first Executive Committee meeting at our new headquarters, to enable the office staff to educate the members of the Executive Committee on the extensive service work which goes on each day at the central office, and, most importantly, to enable the members of the Executive Committee to personally thank the office staff for their untiring dedication, hard work, stability, goodwill, and friendship during the turmoil and transitions of these last months. Each of these fine people is to be commended for extraordinary service: Am Arunvattanavong, Matthew Block, Scott Forsythe, John Hales, Gloriann Harris, Bob Kwiatkowski, Michael Painter, and Marina Panos. Thanks.

#### CLOSING COMMENTS

There are many ways in which to attempt better to understand the process of organizational restructuring through which we have been going these last six months and the impact these changes have had on each of us personally. One of the most profound ways was shared with me by Marilyn Kulieke who recently attended a workshop on organizational change. In that workshop, the impact of significant organizational change on the individual was discussed in the context of the grieving process. This process has been articulated by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and was expressed in the workshop materials as follows:

From time to time, each of us experiences loss. Losses can be mildly irritating, or they can be devastating. Whether the loss be of a romantic illusion, a cherished pet, a home, a significant organizational relationship, a prized possession, or a beloved friend or dear one, loss brings grief.

Grief is not only unpleasant, it is work. The deeper the loss, the harder the work to be done. So long as the work of grief remains unfinished, there can be no real health or peace for us. Many of us carry about with us some unfinished business, some task of working through a bereavement. Unaddressed it cloyes at us and limits our effectiveness. Until that need to grieve is acknowledged and worked through, we cannot be strong and whole.

It has been postulated that there are five stages of the grieving process, all of which must be traversed in order to reach the final stage--acceptance of the loss or change. The stages are roughly described as follows:

**Denial.** The first stage is denial. This is a state of shock, numbness, panic, refusal to accept reality. We do everything to put things back in place and pretend the situation isn't happening. At this stage we often feel a little crazy. We are not letting ourselves know what has happened or letting ourselves feel the feelings generated by what has happened.

**Anger.** When we are ready to quit denying our loss, we move into the next stage: anger. Our resentment or wrath may be justified or unjustified, rational or irrational. We need to be careful of making decisions at this stage, or initiating confrontations we may regret later.

**Bargaining.** After we have calmed down, we may attempt to strike a bargain with life, ourselves, another person, or even God. If we do such and such then we won't have to suffer the loss. At this stage, we are trying to prevent the inevitable.

**Depression.** When we finally become exhausted from our struggle to ward off reality, and decide to acknowledge what life or our decisions have brought to us, we become sad and depressed. This is mourning, the essence of grief. This is what we have been attempting at all costs to avoid. But when we accept this process and the reality of what has transpired, we can humbly surrender to the reality and begin a forgiveness process which will end only when the process has been worked through.

**Acceptance.** Finally we arrive at a state of acceptance. Acceptance is not resignation or hopelessly giving up. Acceptance is a sense of calm, almost devoid of feelings. It is as if the pain is gone, the struggle is over. We are at peace with the way things are. We are free to stay, to go on, free to make whatever decisions we need to make. Our loss, however minor or significant, has become a part of our present circumstances. Even if we lack insight, even if we have fears, struggles, and confusion, we understand that somehow things are as they must be. We accept what is. We settle down. We stop running, ducking, controlling, and hiding. And we know it is only from this point that we can go forward.

The process described seems especially pertinent in our own current organizational situation. Notwithstanding the claimed rightness or wrongness of the reasons, URANTIA Foundation has terminated our license to use the symbols from *The Urantia Book* which they have registered as trademarks. This action, in effect, caused our separation from the Foundation, required us to change the name of our organization from URANTIA Brotherhood to Fifth Epochal Fellowship (provisionally), and forced us to re-locate into a new headquarters building. Taken together, and aside from the significant opportunity we have to deepen our commitment to the achievement of our organization's founding purposes, our perception of our organizational identity and our very real organizational relationships have changed dramatically. There is certainly grief here for although we may well have ascended to a new level of potential and opportunity, we have also lost what we felt was important to us before. The enhanced understanding of the normal processes often associated with this kind of grieving may enable all of us to understand where we are in the process and to recognize the stages in others, thereby enhancing our ability to help each other work toward the stage of acceptance. In addition, understanding can help to insure that we learn as much as possible from the experience.

Whether we like what has happened or not is not as important as reaching full acceptance of its reality with a deepened sense of dedication and commitment not just to make the best of it but to work to see that the maximum good comes from it. There is a significant need and a Supreme opportunity for all of us to play a part in this process.

God bless you.

In fellowship,

David N. Elders  
President