

# The Circles

4202 Meadowchase Lane  
Houston, TX 77014  
January 22, 1989

David Elders  
URANTIA Brotherhood  
533 Diversey Parkway  
Chicago, IL 60614

Dear Dave:

We appreciate your desire to understand the motives of the fellow readers who have formed *URANTIA Book* related groups separate from the Brotherhood. Our staff met on January 15, 1989, and after extensive discussion agreed that we will not send a representative to the roundtable discussion on February 11. We trust that we can be of as much service by sending this letter to all the persons invited to the meeting. Our prayers and best wishes will be with all of you as you meet.

## Why We Became a Separate Organization

The Dallas Fellowship has published *The Circles* since 1978. It also publishes pamphlets such as the *Spiritual Living Pamphlets* and puts on conferences and retreats. When we decided to begin publishing *The Circles*, our group was functioning under the name "The Dallas Fellowship for the Study of *The URANTIA Book*." We had applied for society status, had been accepted and were scheduled to be inducted. Suddenly, one week before the induction was scheduled, we were told that there was to be a freeze on the formation of new societies until the conflict over the licensing/confirmatory agreement was resolved. We went ahead with the formation of our organization, calling it by the Dallas Fellowship name. Had it not been for the licensing/confirmatory agreement controversy, *The Circles* might have originated as a society function.

During the first years, the *Circles* staff functioned under URANTIA Foundation's requirement that we submit each article containing a quotation from *The URANTIA Book* for approval prior to publishing. We saw that the

Foundation did not grant permission to quote from the book if it did not like what was said in the article. The Foundation had also made it clear (in the process of creating the licensing/confirmatory agreement) that it had the power to apply pressure through the Brotherhood on individual Brotherhood members—and was apparently willing to use that power. During that time, and for several years to follow, *The Circles* was virtually the only publication where people felt free to express opinions which disagreed with the views of Brotherhood and Foundation leadership.

When groups of readers were once again permitted to become societies, the publishers of *The Circles* chose not to have it become a function of the URANTIA Society of Dallas because we felt it was important to remain as free as possible from the possibility of Foundation pressure. We considered ourselves to be a "free press," and to be a healthy and contributing part of the larger brotherhood of *URANTIA Book* readers.

Our experience had also shown us another reason for remaining separate from any other organizational structure. The Dallas Fellowship intentionally has only enough structure to get its job done. When there is a special project (such as a conference) to be organized, we form a group, often including people who are not a part of the organization. We accomplish the task and disband. We do not have long-term committees which exist whether they have a purpose at the moment or not. We do not have business meetings unless they are needed to accomplish some necessary function. If we were maintaining a more conventional organizational structure, the structure and procedure would absorb a great deal of time and effort, leaving less for the service we are trying to perform. We like this very functional arrangement. We do not wish to mingle it with a more traditional and formal organization.

### The Advantages of Small, Spirit-Led Organizations

We feel that there are advantages to having small, independent groups, especially if they are spirit-led. We like the small, fluid units by which we function. We like the lack of procedure and politics. We like our openness to intuitive as well as logical input. We pray a lot and consciously try to discern spiritual guidance in what to undertake and how to proceed with it. Because we value smallness and versatility so highly, we have no desire to become large and establish structure.

Because our governing group is very small (seven at present) and because we have learned to function in spiritual unity, we can function by unanimous decision of the group. We all trust each other's motives. Although we frequently do not agree with each other's opinions, our goals are the same. We have faith that if we discuss the question long enough, we will come to a point of agreement—and we always do. We have faith that the final product of our discussion will be far better than any proposal of any individual—and it always is. Such relationships between us would not be possible without spiritual unity—our common goal of doing the Father's will, our appreciation for the unique contributions of each member, and our trusting acceptance of each other. Unanimous agreement is reached regularly and pleasantly. We actually

enjoy and look forward to our meetings where we can observe the mystery of evolving unanimous group decisions.

Our ambition is to foster the spread of the gospel of Jesus (that there is a personal relationship to be had with God through prayer, worship and constant communion with God, and that this relationship will result in a continually growing service relationship with our brothers). This is not precisely the ambition we started with, but it is where we are now. Because we are small—and by some spiritual miracle growing together—we have not had to argue, lobby, or vote ourselves to this purpose. Since we have all participated, no one feels abandoned or left behind by our evolution.

We feel that it is appropriate that there be many small working groups and lots of experiments. In these groups people can try their ideas, learn from their own efforts, and become wiser. There will be many failures because creative, successful ideas are a result of the freedom to try and fail. In these small groups individuals will have great opportunity to gain experience. Leadership can develop. These small groups are schools for potential leaders to work together in groups and to develop teamwork. This is one of the most important lessons to be learned on our planet.

### Relationships Between Organizations

With regard to organizational ethics, we would like to share our experience. There is some overlap between Dallas Fellowship membership and URANTIA society membership. At times our members are officers in both organizations, and Dallas Fellowship members who are not society members have served on projects of the Dallas Society. This cooperation was not easy to achieve at first, but we have always worked out the difficulties, and the relationship between the two groups is excellent. Our success in handling the difficulties is a result of conscious individual choices to be accommodating, inclusive and self-restraining where needed. We believe this situation is the result of individual commitment to our friendships by all persons involved, of our respect for each other's choice of service, and of our mutual commitment to doing our Father's will. We simply care about each other and what each is trying to achieve for the kingdom. We don't see that there is a conflict (ethical or otherwise) in overlapping memberships or even officers between these two organizations. The service is what is important, not the group or the person doing it. Our groups feel a part of each other. Membership really is not considered relevant to anything except organization governance. We support and encourage each other and avoid destructive competition.

We try to cooperate with and encourage all others engaged in spiritual service. This is true even if we have some reservations about the appropriateness or timing of the service they are performing. We encourage them to diligently seek to discern and correctly interpret the always present spiritual guidance in all their serving. As this living communion grows, it shows in their decisions. We have observed people learning by trial and error, making adjustments, and growing spiritually into wise servers.

**We firmly believe that those of us who have the religion of Jesus in common can and will learn to work together harmoniously (that includes cooperation between groups). Learning cooperation requires commitment, prayerful effort, and active practice to achieve faith in one another. Faith involves giving each other the gifts of trust and even forgiveness when necessary. This cooperation will be an outgrowth of our individual spiritual growth. Such things as forgiving tolerance, sincere fairness, and loving service (to our brother readers as well as everyone else) are fruits of the spirit.**

In friendship,

The Dallas Fellowship, Inc.

Tommie Clendening

Bill Cooper

Kaye Cooper

David Glass

John Hyde

Gene Joyce

Sarah Nachtweh

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thank you

...to all of you who have donated to The Circles. We appreciate your assistance.

If you have not sent your donation and you are able to contribute, please use the enclosed envelope (and form with address label attached) to send your donation. We have not yet received enough money to cover our budget for this fiscal year.

Canadian readers...Please send Postal Money Orders or World Money Orders in U.S. dollars rather than personal checks because of bank charges. Thanks.

With warm wishes,

*the staff*