

Forward with the Global Council

By

Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

We have come a long way since 1945 when two major Pentecostal organizations joined to form the United Pentecostal Church International. One of the key objectives in this merger, and in forming the Foreign Missions Division, is to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world in obedience to the great commission.

In retracing our steps since 1945, Lloyd Shirley, our Director of Education/AIM recently wrote, "It is clear that much has changed. It is also clear that the most important things remain the same. The task of balancing the changing and the changeless has always been a slippery slope to travel. John Stott said, 'It's easy to be contemporary if you don't care about being faithful. It's also easy to be faithful if you don't care about being contemporary.' In Foreign Missions we strive to hold on to unchanging truths."

Today, the United Pentecostal Church International is represented in 177 nations. Our goal is for the true gospel to reach into every nation by 2010. In the last four years 386,925 have been baptized in the saving name of Jesus Christ and

827, 897 have been filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Last year alone we had 106 fulltime Bible colleges with 5,409 students enrolled. Over 25,000 participants attended 401 seminars. Another 38,000 received training in our correspondence Bible schools. Over 6,553,701 books, tracts and other literature, in over seventy languages reached into nations of the world. We have approximately 652 North American missionaries, and nineteen regional missionaries serving 1,535,867 constituents, and endeavoring to reach over 6,400,000,000 people in our world. Our world boasts of 440 mega cities with more than 1,000,000 inhabits each. I rejoice with the battles fought and the victories won. Yet, I also realize that every 4.1 seconds another soul is born on this planet. There are 138,000 more lost people in the world today than yesterday. The waiting harvest is slipping through our hands. The weight of the world lingers inescapable every minute of the day. We must unite our forces, and network with our churches in each nation in order to make a more concerted effort in reaching our world. The great commission is for every member of the body of Christ regardless of location, social status, or economic level. How will accomplish this? Global Council enters center stage.

What is the Global Council?

The Global Council is a coordinating body that brings United Pentecostal Church's leaders from around the world together to ensure loyalty to doctrine,

adherence to holiness, and an encompassing evangelism program that will effectively reach our lost world. The *International Articles of Faith* is the doctrinal platform that weaves our international leaders into a harmonious team. Each national board within a nation is permitted to set up the administrative structure and worship styles suitable to their environment. However, all agree to conform to and teach the doctrine and standards of holiness outlined in the *International Articles of Faith*.

The Global Council provides the church its greatest opportunity ever to unite the forces of our global family to fulfill the task of world evangelism. The future promises a greater impact as effective national leaders propel the gospel into new dimensions.

What is the purpose of the Global Council?

- To strengthen our unity through closer fellowship worldwide
- To uphold the *International Articles of Faith* and standards of righteousness
- To unite our missionary endeavor worldwide
- To develop plans for worldwide evangelism
- To promote the World Network of Prayer

The purpose of the Global Council is to enhance evangelism! A deep burden for souls is the demanding factor that mobilizes the worldwide church.

Throughout its development, the heart of the Global Council has always been souls! The formation of the Global Council forms the basis for the leadership of all churches around the world that are part of the UPCI family that are working together to evangelize the lost. A clearer understanding of fellowship and a plan for working together involves more people in the performance and financing of the gigantic task of world evangelism.

The council provides a platform from which to discuss the preservation of doctrinal truths. The *International Articles of Faith* of the United Pentecostal Church International are the doctrinal basis of all of these churches. By the formation of the council, we can be certain that there would be no changes made to these universally held truths without input from all those that would be affected by those changes.

Who makes up the Global Council?

Every national organization from any country having an affiliation with the United Pentecostal Church International is a member of the Global Council. The Global Council convenes every five years, and each nation is responsible for the funding of their delegate to attend the meetings. Between sessions of the Global Council, the Executive Council represents the worldwide group.

We recently had our Global Council meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, with 175 attending, representing 110 nations and over 171 languages. It was tremendous success! As I co-chaired the Global Council, I was awed by the tremendous fellowship and heritage we possess within the United Pentecostal Church International. Directly in front of me sat Brother Lee Sherry. Thirty-eight years ago, at the age of thirteen, he baptized me in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To my left sat Brother Robert Rodenbush. At fifteen, I preached my first message in his church. My parents divorced when I was three, and my father died when I was ten. My mother, although familiar with the church as a young woman, fought against my being part of it. Before Mother's death four years ago, she received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. My wife, Diane, grew up in the church, and her grandfather was a minister. Together, we have a made up mind, have never looked back, and we are firmly committed and unwavering with the faith once delivered to the saints. A host of others share my feelings. It will be through the upholding of truth and uncompromisingly preaching that we will evangelize our world. The Global Council protects our heritage!

What is the Executive Council?

Each region sends seven delegates to an Executive Council. The Executive Council convenes approximately 2 1/2 years after the Global Council meeting.

The general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International serves as the chairperson of the Executive Council and the Global Council. If he is unable to attend the meeting for any reason, the general director of Foreign Missions serves as the chairman. It was great having Brother Kenneth Haney at our recent Global Council. He did an outstanding job casting the vision for worldwide evangelism and faithfulness to apostolic doctrine.

Each region also has its own administrative framework under the oversight of the regional director.

What is the Global Commission for Missions?

A select committee for the purpose of missions has been formed within the Global Council. This is a standing committee and is referred to as the Global Commission for Missions. It is the missionary arm of the Global Council. Within each region we have established the Regional Commission for Missions.

All membership organizations of the Global Council, which are sending and/or regularly supporting missions outside of their own nations, are members

of this commission. The general director of Foreign Missions chairs the sessions of the Global Commission.

The Global Commission organizes evangelism outreach to assure that all countries of the region are properly evangelized. Under the administrative guidelines of the Global Council, regional missionaries are commissioned. The purpose of the commission is to coordinate the efforts of the churches sending, the missionaries going, and the nations receiving.

What are Regional Missionaries?

We must always keep in mind that our primary work as a church and as a Christian is, and always has been, world evangelism. Our frontline missionaries forever remain my heroes; models of personal sacrifice and commitment. They are joined by a host of short-term workers serving as associates in missions, and an ever-growing number of North American pastors and missions' teams ministering overseas. Along with multiplied thousands of national preachers they comprise our world evangelism labor force. There is an emerging army of national missionaries willing to cross geographical, language, and cultural lines to reach the lost.

Regional (national) missionaries will not replace our vital North American missionaries. We once partnered with them to evangelize their nations. Now the

table has turned. In obedience to the great commission, they place the yoke on their shoulders. They now partner with us to reach all nations. "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, *NIV*). It's only when we maximize partnership that we will maximize impact. Realizing that one or two nations alone cannot reach the world the Regional Missions Program of the UPCI's Foreign Missions Division mobilizes the church around the world to give and go. It is difficult for our North American missionaries to enter closed door nations. Our God specializes in opening doors. Regional missionaries, in some cases, can obtain visas easily, often know the language, and adapt to the culture quickly.

Each nation, many of which are poverty-stricken, raise funds to support the regional missionary program. The Foreign Missions Division has set up a PIM account for this remarkable plan. We desire to match the funds given by the overseas regions so we can hasten regional missionaries to un-reached or under-reached nations. You can be a part of this partnership by contacting the Foreign Missions Division for more information. The task remains the same. The world needs to be reached. How? Maximize partnership and we maximize impact. Working together promises phenomenal returns on our investment.

So, as you see, we have come a long way since 1945, and our journey is incomplete until the gospel reaches every nation. We have a distance to go, and will reach our objective, as we move forward with the Global Council.