From the President...

Building the Team

One of the most significant aspects of our growth and development in this new phase of the Church of God in the 20th century will be the sharing of responsibility among all of us.

We have been brought face-to-face with a reality that we have not had to contend with before. Throughout Western society the **rigid hierarchical relationships of the past are being forced into retirement. It does us no good to fuss and fume about the uncertainties it may cause us. It is a fact of life today**.

While not all of us are connected to such a world, it is where most people _will be_ in a few more years. And in order to communicate effectively in this unfamiliar world, as one great Canadian hockey player has said about winning, we must "go to where the puck _will be_."

What does this change in society mean for us in practical fact? It means we must build a team-based organization.

It is interesting that society around the world is dealing with the same challenge we are facing. However, if we succeed in building a team-based church, we will be better equipped to serve humanity, because we will be speaking a common language.

New approaches in management emphasize that innovative working relationships are essential to success in a world of changed expectations.

In this article I want to introduce our readers to some of the material I recently delivered at a meeting of the U.S. regional pastors. The presentation explained the approach we are working toward at the home office, and which I believe will have a refreshing effect on the Church throughout our new structure.

In preparation I went to the management literature on team building. This is relatively new material, not to be confused with earlier attempts at the same concept. In a 1995 book one group of authors, aware of the profound shift that is now necessary in relationships, writes:

"We portray the transition from the traditional hierarchical, individually oriented organization design to a team-based design as a large-scale change process that challenges the assumptions and values that have become part of the culture of most established organizations" (Susan Albers Mohrman, Susan G. Cohen and Allan M. Mohrman Jr., _Designing Team-Based Organizations_, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1995, page 2).

This statement indicates the difficulty many of us will have in making the change. But make it we must, not only for the sake of communicating with the world out there, but also for our own long-term development. The kind of individual spiritual growth that is possible by utilizing some of the principles of team building within the spiritual organism that is the Church, is very encouraging.

Let me make an important clarifying statement at this point. It isn't that teams have no structure or that hierarchy has been removed completely. The Church still has hierarchy. After all, Jesus Christ is still the head of the Church; but He also showed by His example on the earth a pattern of service and humility. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords, yet He took the form of a suffering servant.

But how did we as a church arrive at this point of engaging in such new approaches? Aren't we too young an organization to set out in new directions?

The story begins a number of years <u>before the Indianapolis conference</u>. **In fact, Herbert Armstrong spoke of team-based organization in his last book,** *Mystery of the Ages*. He spoke of the relationship between members and elders of the Church in this way:

"All these various members God has set in his Church are interdependent--mutually dependent on one another. They form a team--an *organized spiritual organism*--utterly different from any secular and worldly organization!" (pages 267-268). Mr. Armstrong went on to say that "the Church is organized on God's pattern of mutual teamwork and cooperation to function perfectly together" (**page 271**). Some among those who later became part of the United Church of God, an International Association, including the regional pastors at that time, and some of those in administrative positions in Pasadena, <u>including our treasurer Steven Andrews</u> and his colleagues in the finance area, and those who worked with me in the Ambassador Foundation, <u>began trying to implement the concept that Mr. Armstrong discussed</u>. There were no doubt others as well. Allow me to explain where this led.

During the few days leading up to the May 1995 Indianapolis Conference, the planning group began to work together in a mutually accepting way.

What was new was the critical task at hand and the attitude necessary. The critical task was <u>to propose a reorganized structure of the Church</u>. This had to be done from scratch, with few guidelines. In effect, we were given a "blank slate." The necessary attitude was one of <u>humility and a willingness to really listen to the others</u>.

It all called forth a new level of collaboration and cooperation. The ideas had been out there, but we had not really begun to use them throughout the Church.

What I want to stress in all of this, though, is the humility that was evident.

Let's be clear. The most essential element of what we are discussing cannot be found in a management book. The creation of teams with the essential component of <u>godly humility</u> is not found in management texts. Yet if that component does not underlie our approach, <u>we will not succeed</u>.

We came back from Indianapolis and began the search for an office. The staff began to take shape, and I began to think about the structure that the office staff should have. How would this group of people, who knew each other in a different configuration, now work together?

I determined it would have to have a different set of relationships. The experience of Indianapolis had shown the value of <u>a flattened hierarchy</u>. It was new, and **God had shown it to us**. But how would it work on the day-to-day office level?

We found some office space rather quickly--actually it was located by two members of the Eagle Rock congregation. When it came to deciding the placing of people in office space, I decided to do things differently and took a space for myself in the middle of everything, not remote at the opposite end from everyone else, or even on a different floor.

I had learned something from my visits to Japan in the 1980s. There the advertising agency we worked with was organized with the president at the center of operations on the same floor surrounded by the staff. They could see him and he them. The Japanese have learned a lot about consensus.

In those early days our Human Resources manager, Nalene Coker, and I began to talk about an organization chart. People needed to have their responsibilities defined structurally.

I asked Nalene if she had ever seen an organization chart designed around the visual concept of a cluster. She hadn't. We tried to find one and couldn't.

I remembered a visualization of the dimensions of personality back in the '60s. It comprised a central cluster with smaller clusters attached. But there was interconnection between the clusters, not as the spokes of a wheel, but sometimes without going through the central cluster immediately.

Over the years we have seen turf battles for control. **Hierarchical organization charts can promote that**. What we are trying to define here is a collaborative process with leadership--teams do have leaders.

It began to dawn on me that the cluster was a more apt description of what we were actually beginning to do in the Church. It's still rudimentary, but it begins to describe the reality of a more open and responsive structure.

The traditional organization chart is two dimensional and pyramid shaped. It does not match the needs of the interdependent, interconnected, semi-globalized society that has emerged in the last 15 years.

We are not very far down the road on team-based organization, but we have made a start.

In the book *Designing Team-Based Organizations* by Mohrman, we read:

"Performance pressures and the complexity of the environment being faced by organizations today have exceeded the capacity of the traditional, functional, hierarchical organization to effectively coordinate and integrate. Traditional approaches, which rely on hierarchically determined decisions, goals, rules, programs, and job descriptions, are insufficient in the dynamic, complex, and demanding world now faced by many companies" (page 9).

In a 1989 book, *The Age of Unreason,* Charles Handy made the point that the organizational "center" with the team-based approach "genuinely is at the middle of things and is not a polite word for the top" of a pyramid (Harvard Business School Press, Boston, page 123).

The 3-D clusters of activity that I am describing seem a much more appropriate structure for the multifaceted work we are again called to. As the Church continues its development as an international association, we will need this kind of responsive structure.

Here's another quote, this time from *The Boundaryless Organization* by Ron Ashkenas (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1995, pages xix-xx):

 "Nobody argues anymore with the notion that what it takes to succeed today is radically different from what it took yesterday and that tomorrow's success factors will be different as well....

"To succeed in this environment, leaders need to rethink the traditional ways that work gets done.... The old questions of status, role, organizational level, functional affiliation, and geographic location, all the traditional boundaries that we have used for years to define and control the way we work, are much less relevant than getting the best people possible to work together effectively."

The clusters I'm speaking of are in fact teams of talented people brought together by the task at hand. The teams are *staffed from strength* (a very important principle). People are on the teams for the talents they bring. *This is*

not a democratic process; teams *have* to be staffed from strength and they must have leadership. Neither is this an easy process, since we will slip back into our old ways of doing things.

We are not a religious democracy. We seek a Spirit-led consensus. **God is in the process.** By definition then, we cannot be a democracy.

But the team-based system seems to be the most sensible way for us to organize ourselves at this time.

Sometimes the teams are long-standing, sometimes they only exist for a short time until the task at hand is completed. Examples of the first might be a congregation's youth education team, the information systems team, the Executive Committee of the Council, the legal team, the human resources team, or the *Good News* production team. Examples of short-term teams might be the Amendment Committee of the General Conference, a team to study the needs of the elderly in the congregation, the ad hoc committees of the Council, or a home office committee to study a particular purchase.

I referred earlier to Mr. Armstrong's time and the period after his death. We did a lot of work then which involved the Church across the spectrum. I include the thrill of participating in the Watts Line answering service. Many members commented to me on how much they felt revitalized by their contact with first-time respondents. There were the waiting room, newsstand and subscription brochure programs. And I do not exclude the wonderfully rewarding activity of simply praying earnestly for the success and growth of the Church and its work. Sometimes that is all a person can do. But how powerful is that? We must not demean this part of our calling by disparaging remarks about "just praying and paying." They are both a privilege that the majority of the world does not have. Let's never forget that.

Back to the subject at hand: Those involved in strategic planning (a team activity) will tell you that the repetitive or iterative nature of the process is laborious, but it is also self-improving.

Here's another quote from Mohrman's book:

"Teams are quite varied phenomena, and designing team-based organizations requires an appreciation of their variety and an understanding of the applicability of different forms.... The team-based organization [is] a system of embedded and overlapping teams of various kinds, an image different from the traditional line and box, hierarchical organizational depiction" (page 2).

And there are of course the many teams that will begin to form as the regional pastor structure and the ministry and membership begin to work on the many projects that will spring from our new educational efforts.

Now I know that for some this will be uncomfortable. Why not just get the strongest person to make the decisions and be done with it? Well, people don't learn much mutual respect or patience that way, or how to seek input, or the value of peer review.

This is not going to be easy. Again a couple of quotes from Mohrman:

"The transition to teams entails change that pervades all aspects of organizational functioning and involves fundamental changes in how people understand the organization and their role in it" (pages xxi-xxii).

Many of us are crying out for spiritual quality in our lives. We have been undernourished for years. The idea that we are in training for the kingdom of God on the earth has been debased, deconstructed, and stolen from us. The involvement that this approach brings can provide the excitement again in practical terms as we participate in these collaborative activities. These are tools and teachings for the world tomorrow.

We could have ended up repeating precisely where we came from. That would have been much easier. Why did we get forced down this road? I believe we are organizing differently because we are in a different world.

Mohrman notes: "We believe that organizations should be reconfigured to perform work in teams when their strategy and the nature of their work call for such a design.... Strategic changes...are requiring that organizations shift from the traditional hierarchical mode of organizing to one that is more lateral in nature. Lateral integration is built into the fabric of team-based organization" (page 1).

In short, this is a wonderful system, provided humility is present in a majority.

And that again is the key. Even a more rigid hierarchy would be preferable, if humility were present, to a team-based approach with little or no humility. The humility I am speaking of is the kind that recognizes, as Charles Handy writes in *The Age of Unreason*, that "the organization which treats people as assets, requiring maintenance, love, and investment, can behave quite differently from the organization which looks upon them as costs, to be reduced wherever and whenever possible" (page 24).

The role of the ministry and the members in the formation of teams is crucial. Those who lead teams are going to be the linchpins that hold this approach together.

We are going to focus on the education programs as our first project using the new approach. The role of the regional pastor in this will be crucial in the early stages.

It is my hope that once the education programs are up and running we will all have learned enough about the value of the approach that we can move on to other projects.

This is a process that we want to see go through the entire Church. One of the advantages of the process is that it can produce new approaches:

"Innovation occurs when different perspectives and knowledge bases are joined, resulting in the reframing of problems and solutions that would not have been likely or possible from within one perspective" (Mohrman, page 8).

I have mentioned humility a great deal. In reviewing some thoughts on leadership the other day, I came across some excellent material.

Since ministers are some of those who will be leading teams, here are some thoughts from the Bible about ministers. You will notice that they are in positions of *leadership*, but that the mind of Jesus Christ must also be present. We can use these concepts to apply to all who will be leaders. After all, we are all training for leadership. So, while the following quote from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* points out certain characteristics that are essential to ministers, they apply to everyone in some senses:

"1 Timothy 3:1: Continuing his instructions on how the church should conduct itself, Paul turned to the crucial matter of *leadership* qualifications. He wanted to encourage respect for the congregation's *leaders*, so he cited what was apparently a familiar maxim and commended it as a sound one. Two implications emerge: (1) It is valid to aspire to church *leadership*, and (2) church *leadership* is a noble task. The term overseer, sometimes translated `bishop,' is only one of several words used in the New Testament to describe church leaders.... Though each of these terms may describe a different facet of *leadership*, they all seem to be used interchangeably in the New Testament to designate the same office. This office is different from that of deacons....

"3:2: More is required of an overseer than mere willingness to serve. In verses 2-7 Paul listed 15 requirements for a church *leader*: (1) *above reproach*. He must be blameless in his behavior. This Greek word [meaning] `above reproach,' is used in the New Testament only in this epistle.... It means to have nothing in one's conduct on which someone could ground a charge or accusation.... (2) *Husband of but one wife*, literally, a "one-woman man." This ambiguous but important phrase is subject to several interpretations. The question is, how stringent a standard was Paul erecting for overseers? Virtually all commentators agree that this phrase prohibits both polygamy and promiscuity, which are unthinkable for spiritual *leaders* in the church.

"Church leaders must also be (3) *temperate*, `well-balanced'..., (4) *self-controlled...*, (5) *respectable*, and (6) *hospitable*. Such characteristics are prerequisites for those who would lead others into these important Christian virtues. The phrase (7) *able to teach* speaks of a *leader's* ability to handle the Scriptures. He must be able both to understand and to communicate the truth to others, as well as to refute those who mishandle it.... Not all must necessarily do this publicly, of course; some may conduct this aspect of their ministries more informally in private settings. Yet all *leaders* must possess an aptitude for handling the Word with skill.

"3:3: Four negative phrases follow: (8) *not given to much wine...*, and (9) *not violent*. His self-control...is to extend to his appetites and his anger. By contrast, a church *leader* must be (10) *gentle*, or forbearing, making room for others.... Unlike false teachers, an effective church *leader* is (11) *not quarrelsome...*and (12) *not a lover of money....* He neither relishes fighting with others nor pursues his ministry for personal gain....

"3:4: An overseer must (13) *manage his own family well*. Paul's specific focus here was on the children. The most reliable (though not infallible) means of determining the quality of one's potential *leadership* is by examining the behavior of his children. Do they respect their father enough to submit to his *leadership*? *With proper respect* (literally, "with all gravity") may refer, however, not to the children's submission, but to the manner in which the father exercises his authority, that is, without due fuss or clamor.

"3:5: A rhetorical question forms a parenthetical support for the validity of the preceding qualification. Paul made an analogy between *leadership* or management of a home and that in a church.... Many of the same skills and qualifications are needed for both. Success in a family may well indicate success in a church; likewise, failure in a home raises a red flag about one's ability to *lead* in a congregation.

"3:6: An overseer must (14) *not be a recent convert...*, lest his rapid advancement to leadership fill him with pride and conceit, and he experience the same kind of *judgment* that *the devil* incurred for his pride.

"3:7: An overseer *must* also (15) *have a good reputation with outsiders....* Paul's thought here seems to be that church leaders, as representatives of the congregation, are constantly susceptible to the snares of the devil....

"Satan likes nothing better than to disgrace God's work and God's people by trapping church *leaders* in sin before a watching world. It is important therefore that overseers achieve and maintain a good reputation before unbelievers" (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Scripture Press Publications, Wheaton, Illinois, 1985; emphasis on "leader," "leadership" added).

In the Gospel of Luke we find the teaching that really says it all, when we think of the importance of humility in all we do: "And He said to them, `The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called "Benefactors." But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the *leader* as the servant'" (Luke 22:25-26, *New American Standard Bible*, emphasis added).

Coming back to teams, one writer, James Miller, makes the point that the concept doesn't work everywhere. He asks why all organizations don't use teams, and then explains that there are several reasons: "Many don't understand the concept. To them teamwork means simply participative management, a concept that is usually

just given lip service.... **Many are threatened by loss of authority or control**.... Many don't ever find the time.... Many don't know how."

<u>What I'm suggesting, brethren, is that we all begin the process of finding out how</u>.

David Hulme