In the last session of the conference, the Church employees and nonsalaried elders broke into two groups. The nonsalaried elders had an open discussion with Jim Franks and Doug Horchak about their role in serving the congregations, while the employees heard presentations about health insurance and administrative matters.

**Employee health insurance**

Britton Taylor, the Church’s risk insurance and benefits manager, led a review and discussion on the health insurance the Church offers its employees and their dependents. Mr. Taylor began by explaining the history of health insurance that has been offered to its employees over the past 17 years. At one time the Church was self-insured, which enabled it to have more flexibility in the type of health insurance it offered to its employees and retirees. Beginning on June 1, Cigna, a national carrier, became our new provider. A lively question-and-answer session ensued as the new program through Cigna was officially rolled out.

**Ministerial Services administration**

Ministerial Services employee Dave Evans presented a few guidelines on ministerial expense reporting, then introduced Jerry Rehor to discuss computer operations. All pastors were able to receive Microsoft Office 2010, which now allows all to use the same software version. David Johnson, who also assists in Ministerial Services, then discussed the forms to be used for member and Festival assistance and provided more guidelines on processing holy day offerings.

**Moral and Ethics Assessment Committee (MEAC)**

When all the elders reconvened, Larry Neff, chairman of the MEAC, began his presentation by reminiscing with the elders that it had been 20 years since his father, Leroy Neff, had presented a lecture to the elders about ministerial ethics.

He then discussed two basic responsibilities of the committee (which also includes Mike Blackwell, Mike Hanisko, Les McCullough and Paul Suckling). First, in the event that the president and/or the Ministerial Board of Directors have a disagreement concerning the board’s majority ruling on the interpretation of a particular area of the Constitution or Bylaws, the committee would be asked to make a decision. Mr. Neff emphasized that open and thorough communication would take place in the whole process. Four of the five members would have to agree as to which interpretation is correct.

Second, the committee is the body that would investigate moral and ethical allegations brought against an elder. This is the area in which Mr. Neff hopes the committee will not have much
work to do. However, if there is a moral or ethic allegation that needs to be investigated, it would first have to be established by the mouth of at least two witnesses.

In such a case strict confidentiality would be maintained, and all sides of the story would be heard. Four of the five members would have to confirm guilt or non-guilt. The committee would also hear cases of appeal. For instance, if a member of the Doctrine Committee is expelled from that committee, he could appeal to the MEAC, which would hear the appeal and decide the matter.

Mr. Neff also pointed out that the Moral and Ethics Assessment Committee is not the disciplinary arm of the Church nor is it to supersede any discipline that would be administered by Ministerial Services. It will deal mostly with appeals. Steps have been put in place so all proceedings can be done in an organized manner. Emphasis will be on fairness. There will not be a rush to judgment, and all will be dealt with in a proper godly manner.

**Question-and-answer session**

Mr. Franks began this session by emphasizing the need for frequent and steady communication. He related that during the summer of 2010 he read all the letters Herbert Armstrong had written from 1934 to 1986—approximately 2,500 of them—and it confirmed the importance of regular and timely communication.

Mr. Franks acknowledged that we can all do better in the things we are doing, and therefore he appreciates suggestions and input. He then answered a variety of questions from the elders.

In response to a question of whether the conference presentations could be made available for the members to see, Mr. Franks reiterated the desire to share all that we have heard here with the members. Once the conference is over, we will consult to determine the best way to share what we can. One elder expressed thanks that in this conference the Bible was used as never before to show us how we are to do our jobs better. This comment was emphasized by a strong round of applause from the elders.

**Planning for the future—concluding remarks**

Mr. Franks concluded the conference with a reminder that unless we have spiritually minded congregations with spiritually minded pastors, we will not go anywhere and our efforts to preach the gospel will not succeed.

We must be forward-looking; we have more work to do; we must be strong spiritually. Mr. Franks related a story about a teen who once mentioned that the “Church was good on theory, but failed on application.” We have not always followed through. Pastors need to work with the congregations—to bring along the younger people and give them opportunities to serve. People feel more connected to the Church when they are involved in the Church, but they must know they are connected to a bigger picture. Mr. Franks stated that we are running out of time and excuses to develop new leaders to serve in the local congregations.
The elders were admonished to stir up the congregations. Mr. Franks recalled a well-known story of a wealthy man who heard about the great value of diamonds and decided he must have diamonds. He sold his belongings and roamed the world looking for them. After a few years, destitute and failed in his search, he committed suicide. The ironic thing is that the person who purchased his land found diamonds on that very same property.

Mr. Franks said that the point was quite simple. We all have diamonds within our reach. We have to develop what is around us and within our reach. What are we doing to develop the local congregations? Are we uncovering diamonds, or are we covering them up? What if we all went home and made sure our congregations are excited to be part of the Church!

He quoted Zechariah 9:16, which likens God’s people to the jewels of a crown, and Malachi 3:17, which also calls them “My jewels.” Mr. Franks reminded us again that God is developing us, and we have a tremendous opportunity to develop those within our care. We have a stewardship to work with the people of God. We are to spiritually prepare the people of God.

Mr. Franks then asked three questions:

1. Why are we doing this? God called us to be the firstfruits. He expects us to share this truth with others. Preparing the Bride is good, but we can’t justify doing this just for ourselves. God wants to bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).
2. How are we to do this? The answer: through every means available. The Church is to be educated. Foundation Institute will become a valuable tool for many of the young people.
3. What are we to do? Preach the gospel, which is about the Kingdom. It is about educating the world about the Kingdom of God. We have known this. We need both theory and application. We must use both of our legs to move forward—preaching the gospel and caring for the Church.

We faced our greatest challenge since 1995 18 months ago. Now we are going forward. God cannot use us in His work if we are not humble before Him. He quoted from Esther 4:14-16, highlighting her fasting and famous statement “If I perish, I perish!” Esther was going to go before the king no matter the outcome. Likewise, we must do what God wants us to do, and we must be equally committed to take care of the Church. If we do, then we will not fail.

For nearly 2,000 years the Church has been preaching the gospel and taking care of the people of God. We must continue to actively do this. Mr. Franks said we have reason to be optimistic. God has been very good to us in this first year. Our plan is to involve everyone in the Church. If one door closes, we will find another way to preach the gospel, but we must always take care of the brethren. They are His children, and we must be helping and encouraging them always.

The concluding prayer was given by Larry Salyer.

—John Foster