

Friday, April 4, 2025

An Open Letter to the Governing Board Improvement Committee, General Councilors, TDA 2024, and Society Officers – from Ken Keyser

Dear Governing Board Improvement Committee

Tom Allen

Dana Bredemeyer, Chair

Barbara Newsom

Brent St. Denis

General Councilors of The Urantia Book Fellowship

TDA 2024 Delegates and Alternates

Society Officers

Thank you for this opportunity to give feedback to one of the Ad Hoc Committees that is reviewing a few of the Articles of the proposed Constitutional document. I am very happy to learn that you are seeking input from Societies and individuals.

Please let me be very clear, I am writing this letter on my own, not on behalf of First Society or any other person or group. While the opinions herein are shared by many First Society Members, since there was not an opportunity to run this letter past First Society Members, this is **not** an official communication collectively agreed upon by the Society. I am writing from my experiences of reading, listening, observing, and witnessing over the course of the last few years.

GOALS OF THIS LETTER

The goals of this letter are touched on and mixed in throughout the following text; therefore, though it is not possible to give them a true hierarchy, nonetheless, they include:

- a) To acknowledge “the elephant in the room” regarding the proposed Constitutional document, to express the inconvenient truth that the piecemeal review of the Articles needs to be put on “pause” until the overall structure has been reviewed.
- b) To renew the call for the creation of a Constitutional Review Team, as stated in “Resolution D – Process,” that the TDA passed and submitted to the Executive Committee in July 2024 [see the “p.s.” to this letter],
- c) To turn around past mis-steps, stimulate new creative thinking, and preserve engagement with the big picture, and

d) To speak to our legacy, and the irreparable, long-term harm if [no matter how well intended and no matter how much it is “tweaked”] the proposed Constitutional document and its proposed structure is adopted.

OUR NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Urantia Brotherhood (and subsequently The Urantia Book Fellowship) was founded on the concept of networking Local Societies. Article III of the original Constitution and in the current Constitution reads as follows:

“ARTICLE III COMPOSITION

URANTIA BROTHERHOOD shall be composed of members associated together for the purposes expressed in this Constitution into local societies hereinafter referred to as "Urantia Societies," autonomous in conduct of their local affairs, but subservient to this Constitution, chartered by, and inseparably associated with, the integrant organization in this Constitution created and defined, and divided into such geographical groups and correlated by such integrated intermediary organizations as shall be provided to best serve an orderly organization.”

Article III was amended to read “UBF” and “Local Societies,” but otherwise the text of the Article remains the same to this day. [UBFConstitution_SRTMaster.pdf](#)

This “Composition” Article is not in the proposed Constitutional document nor even referenced. Was it even reviewed or considered by the SCICR Team? Or was it intentionally overlooked? The specific language of this vital Article has been the guiding identity of The Fellowship since its inception.

The concept was to create an organization to network, shepherd, and support local Societies, that was the underlying reason the Brotherhood/Fellowship organization came into being. Societies did not form to simply be one more subdivision on a roster maintained at the organization’s headquarters.

BROTHERHOOD/FELLOWSHIP

A couple of definitions that emphasize the importance of relationships and community embedded in the name of our organization:

Brotherhood

Fellowship, alliance

An association for a particular purpose

The whole body of persons engaged in a business or profession

Fellowship

Companionship, company

A community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience

A company of equals or friends: association

The quality or state of being comradely

It is true that the express purpose of Urantia Brotherhood and subsequently The Urantia Book Fellowship is to study and disseminate the teachings of *The Urantia Book*; nevertheless, Article I “PURPOSE” of the original and current Constitution clearly and specifically states that this is to be done “...**through the medium of fraternal association...**” [bold emphasis added].

This systematic creation and support of clusters of people in local, fraternal association, to then participate in the national organization as local Societies, was to be the means by which the study and dissemination, both locally and ultimately to the world, would be fostered by the organization.

The success of the national/international organization was never the goal, it was to be a by-product. The success of the national/international organization was to be measured by the success of the constituent parts, the local Societies.

Addressing the current challenges of the local Societies needs to again be the primary objective of the national/international organization. An independently “successful” central organization was never envisioned as the sole means to achieve the purpose of Article I of the Constitution.

INDIVIDUALISTIC, MATERIALISTIC, and SECULAR

Many of the people of the world, living in these times, are very individualistic. They are looking for quick fixes, for immediate signs that something is working, and instantaneous personal gratification that what they are doing is making a difference. While it may seem to show some fast-moving results, the trend is fleeting and quickly moves on to the next thing. This is not the ideal, long-term cultural trend that will result in a truly progressive world and the long-term, successful dissemination of the book we are called to promote.

It has been pointed out that, in general, the younger generations are not interested in joining groups. However, from a very long-range perspective, these Society groups need to continue to exist, to be poised to welcome and embrace future generations, when the cycle comes around, which it will. If the local groups disappear now for lack of overt networking and intentional support, it will be very difficult to re-create them at the future time when they are urgently needed. Our

local Societies and our national organization collectively need to be standing-strong, at-the-ready, when the spiritual aspects of our culture are again eager to be involved in the fraternal relationships we can offer.

Individual members will come and go; Local Societies have the potential for long-term continuity through personal relationships. That fact must be capitalized upon.

ROBERT'S RULES ENCOURAGES STANDING COMMITTEES

The original standing Committees included some with names like "Fraternal Relations" and "Domestic Extension" that, over time, became "Interfaith" and "Outreach," respectively. The original, internal Fraternal Relations between Societies quickly grew to seek ways to improve relationships with all the faiths of the world, for example. How is this Interfaith Committee not important enough to remain in our Constitution? Why, in the name of "streamlining," is such a concept relegated to the yet-to-be created "Operations Manual"?

WE ARE NOT CALLED TO BE JUST ANOTHER NGO

The world at this time does not need another NGO with 2 or 3 million dollars, staffed by nominally-affiliated members, and parceling out grants for projects, however valid. There are plenty of NGO's out there, and most with a much larger nest egg.

The request by the New York Society and the TDA 2021 for a review of the Constitution was to indeed look at reducing bureaucracy. But it was not a request to remove our origin and history for a drastic, artificial, and short-term revolution. It was, in part, to seek ways in which an updated Constitution could help nurture and improve local Societies, while addressing ways to motivate the growing numbers of Member-at-Large into participation in or with Societies.

It seems that the emotional wave to become an individual-member-primacy model, as proposed, is a desperate grasping to make a change, any change; and hastily shaping the organizational structure around the demands of individualists. Rather, it is imperative that the society-primacy model we currently have be preserved and improved.

A proper, full Constitutional review of the basic structure needs to be undertaken and completed **before** the piecemeal "tweaking" of the flawed structure of the proposed Constitutional document continues. Will this take more effort? Yes. Will it seem to be slow going? Probably. Is it the more worthwhile long-range path? Definitely.

Please be very clear: Societies do not have interest in “control of the Fellowship” as has been implied by some. Societies merely seek the mutual networking and support they are due as primary parts of our collective organization. These concerns are not about a “fear of change” or a “loss of control,” the concerns are about our legacy, about what type of a grassroots organization will still exist when our civilization transitions back from its self-destructive course, from one focused on individualism to one focused on personal relationships again, as emphasized repeatedly in the book.

IN CONCLUSION

The biggest impact we can have on the world will be to continue to demonstrate our loyalty and faithfulness to the importance of relationships. The greatest concern here is about the probable, complete loss of an interrelated family of Local Societies, strongly held together through common purposes and goals.

This letter is a call to begin with the urgent and crucial basics; it is not attempting to speak to the numerous relevant but tangential issues that need to also be addressed; nor does it in any way imply that the current efforts by any dedicated individual(s) are not valued. These imperative thoughts are speaking about the “whole,” not the “parts.”

I would welcome your comments and/or questions.

In God’s Love and Service Together,
signed/ Ken Keyser (773) 338-1127 onelowinauthority@gmail.com

p.s. “Resolution D – Process” ... [second part]

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the General Council shall create a team that is diverse and balanced to cull Constitutional and bylaw ideas throughout our Societies and our membership. The team will give progress reports to the General Council at quarterly meetings, for as long as necessary to allow for discussion of problems and solutions with the Constitution and bylaws. The team will rise and present optional, skeletal models and/or organizational structures for recommendation, resolution, or emendation within one year from adoption of this Resolution. Subsequent to the presentation of said models, the team will be stipulated to focus on one or two of the most promising options; and with understanding and development, to bring the process and results to the General Council, the Societies, the membership; and ultimately to bring the Amendments to fruition.