

Friday, February 21, 2025

Subject: An Open Letter to the General Council – this copy to xxx from Ken Keyser
2/21/2025

Thank you for your thoughts, Ken. I would like to respond to your ideas as a dialectic and in the spirit of Jesusonian unity. I supplement your February thoughts with more of your updated thoughts about what is current.

It is fine to agree to disagree. Such a dialectic promotes Hegelian synthesis.

My responses to your thoughts are in **blue**. Completed on 04/20/2025

Dear xxx,

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 a number of other 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. I apologize that I didn't get this letter written to you sooner.

Likewise, these are my opinions meant to supplement your ideas with historical facts and philosophy about the evolution of the current proposed constitution. I too speak for no one but myself.

While any and all of my notes are subject to discussion, my main point is that the proposed Constitutional draft falls so far short that it should not be voted on, much less approved or implemented, at the February 2025 General Council meeting.

Of course, the proposed constitution was not approved or implemented in February. It was amended to list requirements to become a Voting Member. It will remain on GC agendas far into the future.

THE JUDICIAL REPORT: A Minor but Characteristic Detail

The "Judicial Report and Opinions on 2024 TDA Resolution E" was rendered in a manner not in compliance with the current Fellowship Constitution, Article XII "Departmental Committees," Section 12.5 "Quorum." For the February 2025 decision to be valid without an in-person or Zoom meeting (and its inherent discussion), the written opinions must be unanimous. Since the poll was made by written response to questions,

and the “vote” was 4Y/2N and was not unanimous, a meeting needed to be held in order for the Committee Member poll to be reported as a valid Committee decision. The Judicial Committee’s Internal Poll May Be Accurate, however, it is also Invalid.

Guilty as charged. If I had had the foresight and memory of the constitutional requirement to meet in person, I would have called a meeting. I wish someone had informed me before I made the mistake. The results would most likely have been the same, but that is no excuse. I do apologize. Luckily for me, any consequences of my error are moot, meaning debatable. Time gives a reprieve until and unless a new constitution is ready for a vote to adopt. That may be several years into the future. At that time, the Judicial Committee would undoubtedly follow proper procedure with public opinion input if requested. However, the Executive Committee has already accepted the illegal report of the Judicial Committee and agreed unanimously with the majority opinion. This issue should rest and does not need to come up again, except as a moral argument in favor of following its counsel, even if it is not legally necessary to invoke Section 15.2.

Even the Judicial Committee’s review of the Article XV, Section 15.2 Constitution-amendment question was misplaced thinking. The Judicial Committee confirmed that TDA ratification after an amendment is adopted is “not required” in this “autonomy” case, by the current Constitution.

I do admit that it was “misplaced thinking” in terms of immediate need timing and improper process, but many members wanted to know what a considered opinion from the Judicial Committee would look like in the unlikely event of the ratification of the proposed constitution in September 2024. I agreed and began the flawed judicial process.

Many believe and I am one who hold that it could be dangerous to Society unity and possibly cause Fellowship disruption if there is not a determined effort to satisfy the requirements of Section 15.2 despite the non-necessity to do so. This will take a lot of work.

Thankfully the TDA is in recess and will become much more conversant of the constitutional issues and evaluate what the GC is doing with TDA resolutions. The future educational maturity of the 2024 TDA is imperative so that all the issues and political options are well understood going forward—even until the 2027 TDA.

Even the fact that only one Judicial Committee member secluded himself for self-identified “conflict of interest” when, in reality, two Judicial Committee members should have secluded themselves for that reason: still secondary

Recusal is both secondary and moot unless a new constitution passes in the GC.

PROCESS

The subtle non-compliance with the current Constitution is so emblematic of the kind of processes that have brought us to this point.

Establishing the SCICR without identifying the scope and investigation plans that it will operate under is an example. Not a Constitutional issue at all, but a complete setting aside of good practices.

Not seeking legal counsel for two years, meanwhile ignoring members of the SCICR team who requested legal counsel from the beginning is another example. Not keeping minutes of the meetings [hours and hours of recordings are not the same]... Not periodically reporting back candidly on a systematic basis... Keeping developments “under wraps”... Opposing a “minority report”... And the list could go on.

I could write a book on all the amazing growth and maturation that occurred in myself and SCICR as the black background of occasional mistakes contrast on a white background of what many in the General Council see as a good debatable constitutional framework for the future of the Fellowship.

- One of my SCICR regrets is not choosing a secretary. We did sporadically send out minutes at the end and in the beginning, but otherwise not.
- Another regret was insufficient communication of membership. SCICR did partially implement a calling tree twice for each of us to communicate personally with General Councilors. That calling tree should have also gone out to Society leaders who are not on the GC.
- In the first two years of SCICR, we were idealistic zealots guilty of the Dunning-Kruger effect. We took care of small things to advance the possibility of the submission of an ideal new constitution to submit to the then far distant 2024 Triennial Meeting of the GC.
- It was in July of 2023 that we first contacted legal advice with Tim Duffy. This was a God send of sorts. He selflessly guided us disinterestedly and within SCICR's budget to help unify our association into one legal document that would keep us legally safe. This was the beginning of the time of SCICR maturity and crafting a constitution in light of this good legal advice.
- We did wish occasionally to keep things under wraps in the early days especially because we wanted to await a two-thirds (2/3) majority that SCICR required by rule before we published our decisions. Premature posting would confuse and not allow membership to be able to see the big picture.

- We didn't oppose a "minority report". No one asked me to submit one. RONG allows opposing minority reports. I could not and would not have refused.

"RESOLUTION D": Establish a Constitutional Review Team

These process shortcomings are some of what the TDA's Resolution "D" seeks to address and correct. A Constitutional Review Team does not mean starting over, just reviewing closely and working from better practices. Empowering such a Review Team **prior** to adopting any proposed Constitutional draft would be very beneficial.

The General Council holds the independent authority to establish such a Constitutional Review Team before voting on any proposed Constitutional draft.

As you know, this is not what the General Council decided to do in February. The GC considered resolution D and decided instead to create two new special committees to address some of the more controversial Sections of the proposed constitution. I am opposed to Resolution "G" as a TDA resolution that recommends a constitutional review team. These special committees will evolve over several years.

The special committees constituted by the GC to rise and report next July are:

- **Membership Improvement Committee (MIC).** This committee is still appointed. It made recommendations to Article II in the proposed constitution that were approved in February 2025
- **Governing Board Improvement Committee (GBIC).** This committee is evaluating Article III that defines the new Governing Board (GB). The main issue to be decided will be who the Voting Members vote for, the GB or those who nominate the GB.
- **Society Improvement Committee (SIC).** The constitutional role of how Societies interact with the Fellowship will be debated.

Recently Ken called this process "piecemeal" as if this approach would never work. I believe it will work. There will be a future need for the committees to either converge or meet frequently to confront differences that come up. I sit on GBIC and the SIC. Doubt not that there will be a flow of communication and collaboration to good effect.

Even the presentation of this proposed Constitutional draft has been a "moving target" that has been almost impossible to keep up with. While no document will be "perfect" from the onset, this draft is untenable.

The flurry of the wake-up call that occurred with the unveiling of the proposed constitution in July 2024 has now slowed to allow better informed members of the

Fellowship, and especially the TDA more thoroughly to understand the trajectory of GC consideration of the ongoing proposed constitution.

During the 45-day required public comment period after the public submission of the proposed constitution, SCICR continued to improve ideas that would make it a better document based on ideas coming in from members. Maybe this is the “moving target”. There was never any delusion among us that this proposed constitution would pass in September, but we were eager to at least get it on the table for a long-term look at what would be the most beneficial constitutional form for future Fellowship function. In the meantime, we still operate under our current constitution and are conceiving ways to make a wise transition.

THE VALUE OF SOCIETIES

In Paper 159:3.8 (page 1766.4) there is a statement about what “faith is to religion.” To liberally paraphrase the quote: “Societies are to the Fellowship ‘what sails are to a ship; they are an addition of power, not an added burden of life.’ ”

Good sentiment. I agree that if Societies were strong, educated, compliant, and growing, I would be in favor of a constitution composed of Societies with well-informed Delegates to elect a General Council. Societies do not live up to this ideal and are clearly aging out. In our constitution, we have disenfranchised Members-at-Large (MAL) with no privileges other than the opportunity to being elected to the General Council. Article III in the current constitution says that the Fellowship is composed of “Local Societies”. MAL’s have no vote.

The ideal of the proposed constitution is to enfranchise all members, including all society members to be empowered and well-informed by becoming Voting Members to intelligently elect a vibrant and well-vetted Governing Board.

I am a member of the Fellowship because I am a member of a Society. I am an active participant in work on Fellowship’s organizational level because my Society (and every Society) has a voice in the Fellowship governance. The “voice” is less-than-it-should-be because Resolutions from the TDA can simply make policy requests but not enforce follow-up; nonetheless, the role Societies take in electing General Councilors is a very important factor in the governance process.

I share your status as a Fellowship member through the Oklahoma Society.

TDA resolutions cannot have the power to require legislative action by the GC. There is no way for this to occur legally. In the proposed constitution, the annual Society Advisory Council could provide better GC outcomes with well thought out resolutions

that are considered over time with the GC, until all parties understand clearly what is being proposed. Society Chair leadership could facilitate this. This would improve resolution acceptance by the GC rather than the long history of premature and rushed resolutions every three years.

The TDA is important now, but the model needs to be updated to give ALL members the chance to engage in voting for the Board of Directors, and to facilitate greater Society influence annually.

The proposed Constitutional draft removes that governance involvement and that voice entirely. Those who think a “Society Advisory Council” would replace electing Councilors, or that a role in a hastily-designed “Nominating Committee” is equivalent, are deluded.

Deluded is a strong way to put it. The Nominations Commission has yet to be defined. The GBIC is in earnest debate about this. We have until July to solidify any final proposals. The TDA needs to understand this issue. The SIC has met once, but plans to meet weekly on Wednesdays.

Many disagree with not having Society Delegates elect Governing Board members. The proposed constitution does eliminate the Composition Article in the current constitution that defines Societies as constituting the Fellowship. This Article is left out of the proposed constitution because it is not necessary as the Fellowship is clearly made up of all members of the Fellowship, not exclusively Societies. The ideal of constituting a Voting Membership from all Fellowship members was endorsed by a supermajority of SCICR from the beginning. The idea of empowering all Voting Members with the chance to wield a vote about the best candidates to be Board members or Nominations Commissioners are not delusional models. They are under earnest construction.

With the proposed constitution, the annual Society Advisory Council has the potential power to maintain a strong structure among Societies to work together in the improvement of Fellowship function. Societies can meet and petition the GC annually, as the TDA only had every three (3) years. One of my hopes is that the Society Annual Council will coordinate Societies and become a force for change in the Fellowship.

There are other and better ways to enfranchise Members-at-Large without disenfranchising the beneficial, group-process and governance role Societies must have through a TDA or some similar, truly influential means. I have no reassurance that other models were even considered.

This is your time to craft those ideas with the special committees. Be patient. Let's see what the GC special committees can pull together. There will be a plethora of ideas.

SCICR did look at all kinds of models, and came up with the one we thought best to propose. We knew it had flaws, but putting it on the table was important to engage a sleeping membership about how a new constitution would propel the Fellowship in a more nimble manner and with greater function.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

To quote the fully-italicized sentence in Paper 81:6.40 (page 911.5) “***No great social or economic change should be attempted suddenly.***” Time is essential to all types of human adjustment—physical, social, or economic.” [**Bold** emphasis added.]

It may have appeared to be sudden when it was hurriedly placed on the General Council Agenda in September. But there was no “great social change”. We still limp along with an outdated constitution. The ongoing GC debate on the proposed constitution will likely continue until the TDA meets in 2027. This obviates your objection.

The proposed radical shift from the Fellowship's current form of representative democracy to a form similar to a non-governmental-organization, not-for-profit, business model will be diametrically-opposed to the spiritual brotherhood that was the original intent for establishing our Fellowship organization.

The spiritual brotherhood will not be affected by the new constitution. The idea that delegates from Local Societies in a TDA is the basis of our spiritual brotherhood is hard to justify. What is the spiritual value of secular business that occurs every three years? This is all secular business we are doing now. The proposed Purpose statement and the old one both hold forth the need and value of spiritual community. The Fellowship needs to implement such in order to promote this fine ideal. Constitutional governance does not prevent this.

You are not alone in hoping that the TDA structure for electing the Governing Board is sentimental and essential. There are many who argue for the constitutional transition to allow Voting Members to be the ones who choose among well-vetted candidates to fill eight (8) board positions every two (2) years. There will need to be compromise in the next few years if three-fourths (3/4) of all Societies agree to endorse the evolving proposed constitution.

IN CLOSING

Again, if there is an effort made to call a vote on the proposed Constitutional draft document, General Councilors are needed to speak strongly against such a vote taking place or passing at this time.

Peace, there is no way the GC is ready to pass the proposed constitution in the near future. We must possess our souls in patience as this could well stretch until the next TDA in 2027.

In the meantime, Society conclaves and the continuation of the recessed TDA is certainly an important way to improve knowledge and opinion.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any comments and/or questions. In God's Love and Service Together,

signed/ Ken Keyser (773) 338-1127 onelowinauthority@gmail.com

Sorry for hesitating, but I hope we bring light and not heat to these important evolving issues.

All my best,

Tom Allen
405-570-6862

"The greatest lesson for democracies to learn is for the majority to give to the minority a full, free opportunity to present their side of the case, and then for the minority, having failed to win a majority to their views, gracefully to submit and to recognize the action as that of the entire organization, and cheerfully to assist in carrying it out until they can secure its repeal."

—HENRY M. ROBERT